SODALITY DIRECTOR'S MANUAL

V. REV. JOSEPH F. DITTMAN

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SODALITY DIRECTOR'S MANUAL;

OR,

A COLLECTION OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR SODALITIES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

BY

REV. FATHER F. X. SCHOUPPE, S.J.

Translated from the French

BY

MISS ELLA McMAHON.

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F. X. VAN DER HOEVEN, S.J.,
Præp. Prov. Belg.

DATUM BRUXELLIS, 13 Januarii, 1881.

We willingly permit the publication of this *Sodality Director's Manual*. Filled with a solid and practical doctrine upon the duties of the Christian life, and the too numerous dangers which virtue encounters at the present day, this excellent work will be very useful not only to directors of Sodalities, but to all engaged in the instruction of youth.

V. A. CARDINAL DESCHAMPS,
Arch. of Malines.

MALINES, January 25, 1881,
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.

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PREFACE.

OF all the means employed by the Church for the promotion of piety, particularly among youth, there are few more efficacious than sodalities or confraternities of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Happy are the parishes and educational houses which possess fervent and flourishing confraternities, asylums of perseverance, centres of piety, nurseries of good works and holy vocations.

Now, the fervor and prosperity of a confraternity depend in a great measure on the pious instructions given at the meetings. If these instructions and conferences are well chosen, suited to the age, condition, and circumstances of the members; if they tend to inspire them with an enlightened and solid piety, which includes hatred of sin, love of labor, and the constant practice of strong

Christian virtues, they cannot fail to produce admirable fruits.

The end of this present volume is to *facilitate* this important task for those who are charged therewith; to *suggest*, traced in outline only, *subjects* useful to them; to offer a few practical, fruitful ideas, from which they *will draw better ones*, and which will *put them in the way of giving* to this kind of exhortation all its interest and weight. The reader, then, must seek less for ready-prepared sermons than for the doctrine and substance which form the groundwork thereof. The matter is here; it is for the director to appropriate and adapt it to the special wants of his auditors and clothe it in suitable language.

May our modest work help to nourish the piety, confirm the virtue and increase the happiness of the happy Children of Mary!

The Children of Mary! Ah! glorious Queen of Heaven, blessed and tender Mother, they are thy joy and thy crown. Consecrated to thy honor, making open profession of piety by enrolling themselves under the standard of thy Son, they form a band of elect in the Church militant. Thou coverest them with

thy special protection, powerful Virgin; thou leadest them to combat and to victory if they are but faithful to thee.

Oh! that it were given me to inspire them all with increased love for their amiable Mother—not a barren love, but a love the fruit of which would be inviolable fidelity to the engagements they have contracted toward their august sovereign! Then I would have assured them a pledge of salvation and increased, O Mary! the joys of thy maternal heart.

That this happiness may be mine, deign, O holy Virgin! to bless this little work undertaken for thy glory. If thou hearest my prayer it will be my sweetest consolation before leaving this world. My course is almost run; and as the end approaches, among many regrets which I experience before God, one of the most sorrowful is, alas! having loved thee too little, O sweetest and most amiable of mothers! But if this work be pleasing to thee, if thou deign to bless it, if it bear fruit among thy dear children, I will find in it compensation for a too barren past and consolation for the hour of death.

Sodality Director's Manual.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF CONFRATERNITIES.

Inhabitabo in tabernaculo tuo in sæcula; protegar in velamento alarum tuarum (In thy tabernacle I shall dwell for ever; I shall be protected under the covert of thy wings).—Psalm lx. 5.

IF the storm-bound mariner is happy to find a port of safety, if the traveller traversing a hostile country rejoices to find a protection against the dangers which surround him, how much more should the Christian rejoice at finding open to him a safe asylum in the midst of the perils of this world!

This refuge offered us by the divine mercy is the *sodality* or *confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* Happy those who know and appreciate it! It shines in their eyes as the sanctuary of the Queen of Heaven, as her dwelling in the midst of men, her blessed tabernacle where the children of this divine Mother

are happy to dwell under the covert of her wings. *In thy tabernacle I shall dwell for ever; I shall be protected under the covert of thy wings.*

What, then, is a confraternity? And what are its advantages?

Considered exteriorly, a confraternity presents itself to us as a pious association formed of persons chosen from among the most exemplary of a college, school, parish, or city.

If we would have a more distinct idea of it, if we would know the nature of a confraternity, the end it proposes, the means it employs, here is a definition of it: *A sodality or confraternity of Mary is a pious association, canonically established, to help the faithful in the constant pursuit of good under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

1st. It is an association—that is, a reunion—of persons belonging to a determined class and forming one body, directed by a council according to established rules.

2d. A *pious* association. Piety is the proper characteristic which distinguishes sodalities from all other societies, whether commercial, recreative, or scientific.

3d. *To aid the faithful.* . . . Here is the end of the confraternity and the object it proposes to itself: *to aid the faithful in the pursuit of good;* in other words, confraternities are established to give powerful spiritual succor to those

who wish to continue in the pursuit of good and to advance in virtue. There are many who desire to lead a Christian life, but they encounter a multitude of obstacles in the world, in their profession, even in their families. They need aids, and these aids are offered them in confraternities.

There are some who, animated by noble sentiments, would make their lives a chain of virtues and good works, an ever-ascending path to heaven; they need aid and direction. And this aid and direction are equally offered them in confraternities.

In a college how many young men have the noble desire to protect their future and assure themselves a happy and honorable career! But they are young, weak, inexperienced and surrounded by snares and seductions; they need aid and counsel. Now once again this aid and this counsel are offered them in a sodality.

Do you ask what these aids are, in what they consist? First of all, in the mutual support the associates afford one another; all animated with the same sentiments—their union forms their strength; then, in the exercises of piety performed in common, and the prayers offered for all the members; finally, in the special protection of the Blessed Virgin.

4th. *Under the protection of the Blessed Virgin.* The protection of the Blessed Virgin is the

principal means of attaining the end proposed by the confraternity. There is question here of a most special protection merited by consecrating one's self to the Mother of God and vowing to her a particular devotion. This devotion and the protection it inevitably secures are a pledge of perseverance and salvation.

5th. Finally, the confraternity is an association *canonically established*, which means it is approved, recognized, adopted, erected as a confraternity by the Holy See, whose authority is no other than that of God.

It is God Himself, then, who endowed the Church with this new means of salvation; here is the way in which it providentially came about.

In 1563 there lived in Rome, in the Society of Jesus, a young Belgian, born at Liége, named Jean Léon. In the Roman College he had the lowest grammar-class, where he devoted himself more to forming the hearts than cultivating the minds of his pupils.

Convinced that the protection of the Blessed Virgin is a very efficacious means to preserve innocence and to become a perfect Christian, the young professor from time to time assembled the most fervent of his disciples to exhort them to devotion to Mary and teach them to render themselves worthy of her love. They erected an oratory, where they had general

prayers; they had edifying reading; they proposed to themselves to honor the Mother of God by imitating her virtues and by frequenting the sacraments.

The fruits which these pious pupils gathered from their reunions, and the odor of virtue which they spread in the college, excited the attention of the rector and the first superior of the order. Father Claude Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, spoke on the subject to Gregory XIII., who then occupied the papal chair. The pope, touched with the happy results of these pious reunions, erected them into a confraternity under the title of the Annunciation of Our Lady, and made the very general of the Society of Jesus superior. The bull of erection was given the 5th of December, 1584. It grants to the new confraternity rich indulgences, and confers upon it the right to affiliate itself with similar associations which should be established in different Jesuit colleges. The terms of the papal bull erect but one confraternity alone—that which exists at Rome in the Church of the Annunciation, enclosed within the walls of the Roman College; it was established as a *primary confraternity* and placed under the direction of the general of the Society of Jesus, giving him full power to affiliate with it other confraternities, which would thus, by this affiliation, be canonically established and

enjoy the indulgences granted to the primary confraternity.

The bull of Gregory XIII. referred only to the confraternities of students established in Jesuit colleges. A few years afterwards Sixtus V., Clement VIII., Gregory XV. extended the favors and privileges with which Gregory XIII. had enriched the sodalities of students to all sodalities of the pious faithful formed in the churches, professed houses, seminaries, and residences belonging to the Society of Jesus or under their direction. Benedict XIV., in his apostolic letter of the 27th of September, 1748, extols the excellence of these confraternities and confirms all the concessions of his predecessors. Finally, Leo XII., by a special rescript dated March 27, 1825, extended them to all confraternities of men and women, even those not formed in the churches of the Society of Jesus or under their direction.

Such are the acts of the Holy See which make sodalities of the Blessed Virgin a canonical institution of the Church. And since Jesus Christ confirms in heaven what His Vicar binds or loosens upon earth, the sodalities of the Blessed Virgin are not only established by the Holy See on earth, but recognized, approved and blessed by Jesus Christ in heaven. And as the Mother of our Saviour could have no other sentiments than those of her divine Son, it is

evident that a sodality recognized by Jesus Christ is recognized by the Blessed Virgin, who regards it as her own, as a little family consecrated to her of which she is the protectress and mother.

Behold what sodalities are. Is there a holier institution or one more worthy of our respect and love? Let us thank God for having given them to His Church; let us thank Him particularly for having opened them to us, for having admitted us among the number of the Children of Mary. Let us love the sodality; and that we may continue to love it more and more, let us devote ourselves to learning the inestimable advantages it affords us.

CHAPTER II.

ADVANTAGE OF THE CONGREGATION.

Venerunt mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa (All good things came to me together with her)—Wis. vii. 11.

IF you are glad to come to this sanctuary to offer homage to Mary and to sing her praises, if all that you here see and all that you hear delights your heart, it is because you love the sodality as a holy family dear to the hearts of Jesus and His holy Mother. Yes, you love it, and you give proofs of this affection as creditable to you as they are pleasing to God; nevertheless your love is not yet what it should be.

Ah! how much more you would love this holy association if you knew all the treasures it contained and all the blessings it procures its members.

These blessings are immense; the Sovereign Pontiffs have solemnly and publicly proclaimed them to the whole Church, at the same time urging all the faithful to share in them. At their august word sodalities rapidly spread through all countries, and for three centuries

all those who have enrolled themselves in these sodalities have found the inestimable advantages promised them.

What, then, are these advantages?

Here are the principal: a special protection from the Blessed Virgin, a safeguard against the contagion of vice, the pledge of an honorable and happy life, solid piety, the good choice of a state in life, the sanctification of one's state, numerous indulgences, finally an assemblage of all the blessings which a Christian could desire.

1st. First advantage—special protection from Mary. This special protection from the Mother of God is assured you, dear sodalists, because you have vowed to her a special devotion. On entering her confraternity you enrol yourself under the standard of the Blessed Virgin; in making your act of consecration at the foot of her altar you devote yourself to her service, you solemnly protest that you are resolved to always honor and love her, to say nothing, to do nothing, or permit those committed to your charge to say or do anything against her honor; then, in beseeching her to receive you as her servants for ever, you promise her that you will never abandon her and will remain attached to her service to the end of your life.

On her part Mary, who never allows herself to be outdone in generosity, promises you three great favors intimated in the act of consecra-

tion. First, she receives you among the number of her devoted servants, her privileged children; your names are written in her heart and your brows are marked with a filial character which distinguishes you in her eyes from other Christians: *Suscipe me in servum perpetuum.* Second, Mary promises you particular assistance in all your actions, in all your enterprises, in all the perils which you may encounter: *Adsis mihi in omnibus actionibus meis.* Finally, she promises not to abandon you at the hour of death, but to visit you and comfort you in the agony of that supreme moment, and defend you against the enemy in your last combat: *Nec me deseras in hora mortis.*

Such is the special protection assured to the members of the sodality justly styled *Children of Mary.* Is it necessary to say that in this is the pledge of salvation spoken of by the doctors of the Church when they tell us with St. Anselm: *Omnis ad te conversus, O Maria, et a te respectus, impossibile est ut pereat?*—It is impossible for any one devoted to Mary to perish. Whoever, then, turns to thee, O Mary! and merits to win thy regard will be saved; he cannot perish.

2d. Second advantage—a safeguard against vice. Ah! to be preserved from the general corruption we need some powerful protection. We are no longer in the happy days of the early

Church, when the multitude of believers, united by the bonds of a perfect charity, all practised virtue with a holy emulation. Since the enemy sowed the tares in the field of the Father of the family, charity has grown cold, faith has become rare and piety, isolated in the midst of a wicked world, is exposed to the greatest dangers. Therefore what falls, what shipwrecks, what wanderings frequently without any return!

Is it not true that everything is a snare, an enemy to virtue and innocence, particularly in youth? Within are the passions; without are the seductions of the world and the allurement of its pleasures, its false principles, the tyranny of fashion and human respect, frequently even temporal cares, the turmoil of business, by which we allow ourselves to be carried away at the expense of our soul and its spiritual interests. What a deluge, and what souls perish therein!

But the divine Mercy has prepared holy arks for those who wish to escape these dangers; yes, in the sodalities of the Blessed Virgin her faithful servants find a sure refuge from the scandals, the errors, the temptations which devastate the world.

Yes, a sure refuge and most efficacious means of salvation. To convince you of this it is only necessary to consult experience. Hardly were the sodalities known than, to the great joy of the faithful, they were established and multiplied

everywhere, numbering persons of all ages and conditions, who were the elect of piety and shone by their virtues and good works. For the last three centuries we behold them throughout the whole world like parterres of flowers sending forth the good odor of Jesus Christ.

"It is incredible," says Benedict XIV.,* "the advantages which have flowed to men of all ranks from this laudable and pious institution. Some, placed from their infancy under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, have persevered in a path of innocence and piety, and, continuing without deviation in purity of morals and a life worthy of a Christian man and a servant of Mary, have never ceased to give to the world the most beautiful example and have merited the grace of final perseverance Others, miserably led away by the seductions of vice, have returned from the path of iniquity to a complete conversion through the assistance of the merciful Mother of God, to whose service they devoted themselves in sodalities. They embraced a sober, just, even pious life, and, sustained by their fidelity to the religious exercises of these confraternities, they persevered to the end in this new life. There are those also who, because of the tender love which they had from their infancy for Mary, have attained the most eminent degrees of divine charity."

* *Bulla aurea*, Gloriosæ Dominæ.

Would you have a few examples chosen among thousands? It was in sodalities that St. Francis of Sales, Blessed Peter Fourrier, St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Aloysius, Blessed Berchmans laid the foundation of that perfection which they attained through the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The most distinguished persons considered it an honor to be enrolled. Francis II., Duke of Lorraine, to give an example to his subjects and make public profession of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, wished to be one of the first received into the sodality established at Nancy. Charles IV. and Leopold, inheriting their father's piety, rendered their homage to the Queen of Heaven in this same sodality. In 1585 there was established at Louvain, in the house of the Jesuits, the sodality of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, which soon included the students belonging to the various branches of the university. Later there was established in the same city the sodality of the Immaculate Conception, which counted four hundred members, and among them the illustrious Justus Lipsius. This was not sufficient: they were obliged to establish as many as six sodalities, three Latin and three Flemish, for persons of all conditions.

Now, why did the faithful so eagerly hasten to avail themselves of these pious asylums?

Was it not because they sought and found in them a safeguard against vice and the corruption of the age?

3d. Third advantage—the pledge of an honorable and happy life. I have but one life, I will traverse this world but once; I wish to choose the noblest and most beautiful path. This is the thought of every great and noble soul when it has measured with a glance the space of this fleeting life. Like a traveller looking down from a mountain on the country he is to traverse, the true Christian distinguishes among a thousand roads the royal road which leads to his country, and unhesitatingly enters therein. This royal road, the road of honor and peace, is that of the Christian life, traced for us by the King of glory, our Lord Jesus Christ. In this beautiful road has followed after Him through a succession of ages the grand procession of His disciples, the flower and the *élite* of the human race. Outside this path I see no greatness or true happiness, for there is no sanctity or true virtue.

Only the just, the true Christian *shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God. They shall still increase in a fruitful old age, and shall be well treated* (Ps. xci. 13–15). *Blessed is the man whose will is in the*

name of the Lord; he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off (Ps. i.)

The sinner, on the contrary, is like dust driven before the wind, like a barren trunk producing only thorns; his soul is like an uncultivated field, a wasted vineyard: *I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man: and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down* (Prov xxiv. 30, 31).

Such are the images used by Holy Scripture to show us that without virtue we find only shame and misery, while the Christian life is truly honorable and gives to man all the happiness he can enjoy here below.

Observe that we do not speak here of the future beatitude which must be the great reward of virtue, but of that happiness mingled with tears which is a foretaste of it on earth. The confraternity assures it to you, dear sodalists, because it preserves you in that Christian life which is a pledge of it. It brings before your eyes an image of heaven and causes your heart to feel a ray of the angels' joy when, gathered together on festivals, you behold the splendor of the sanctuary and hear the beautiful canticles of the Church. It is here that later, when thrown into the vortex of the world, where

death, in the words of a holy doctor, enters through all the senses, the Child of Mary again finds life and joy. What, then, is sweeter than to take refuge in these happy asylums of virtue which have witnessed the most beautiful years of our life; to come to the feet of the best of mothers to reanimate our hearts, to renew our good resolutions, and wipe off the world's dust, which attaches itself to even the most perfect souls!

4th. Fourth advantage—solid piety. Piety, which consists in the worship of God and in the practices of religion, is all the more precious that it is both the root of all virtues and the principle of all blessings. *Godliness*, says the apostle, *is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8). But to produce these fruits piety must be solid, like a vigorous tree which resists the storms and seasons. We frequently find a kind of piety consisting of tenderness of heart, assiduity in prayer, but unaccompanied by a spirit of labor and constant fidelity to duty; this is a weak and slothful piety, like a flower which is swept away by the wind or withered by the summer's heat. It must be a solid and at the same time firm, enlightened and active piety, which consists in the inseparable union of prayer and duty. Instruction, energy, and a spirit of labor are its three

characteristics, and it is easy to see that the confraternity is made to inculcate them; it instructs its children in the doctrine of salvation, it strengthens them with the sacraments, it nourishes them with the Bread of the strong, which gives them Christian energy and a spirit of labor.

As to the labor of which we speak, it has a double object—the works of duty, and, outside these, works of charity and zeal, which the sodality undertakes or encourages, according to circumstances.

5th. Fifth advantage—the good choice of a state in life. Every man is destined by Providence for a state in life, a career which is suited to him; this is what is commonly called vocation. Nothing is as important as this subject. To deceive one's self in the choice of a state in life is to enter a false path, to compromise one's future, one's happiness, and even one's salvation; to make a good choice is to secure one's happiness in this life and the next.

It is evident that he chooses wisely who follows the will of God and embraces that career for which Providence destines him. On the contrary, to choose a state for which one is not destined is to make a bad choice and fail in one's vocation. The usual cause of this, alas! too frequent misfortune is misconduct and vice, or a blind passion by which one permits him-

self to be guided. Then to avoid falling into this abyss shun the paths of sin; the Christian who remains faithful to God will be guided by His paternal hand to the place which is made for him, to the state in life where he will find the happiness and peace he desires here below. *Justum deduxit Dominus per vias rectas.*

Now, by preserving its members from the tyranny of the passions, by causing them to walk in the path of virtue, by enlightening them on the duties of their different states, by directing them with its counsels, procuring them succor from on high by means of prayer and the sacraments, the sodality guides them surely and safely to the state marked for them. Is not this an inestimable benefit?

6th. Sixth advantage—the sanctification of one's state. It is not sufficient to have embraced a state; we must also sanctify it—that is, fulfil its duties and live in it in a holy and Christian manner.

To sanctify one's state is to be perfect, because it is fully corresponding to the designs and will of God. What, in fact, does God ask of man in the state in which Providence has placed him, if it be not to sanctify it by the devout fulfilment of the duties attached thereto? Is not this what all the saints have done? Whether they lived in the world or in the cloister, on a throne or in a cottage, have they not

everywhere sanctified their state? Is it not what St. Joseph did in his workshop at Nazareth, the Blessed Virgin in her humble house, Jesus Christ Himself during all His life? He expressly declares it, saying to His Father: *Pater, opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam*—"Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John xvii 4).

To sanctify one's state is to lead a life of *duty* opposed to a life of amusement. Do not think, however, that a life of duty is a gloomy, wearisome life devoid of pleasure; those who live but for God and God's good pleasure enjoy the truest pleasure, the sweetest and purest joys, even the most agreeable amusements, for they are animated, as it were, by the presence and smile of the divine Master. We see an image of this happy life in the marriage feast of Cana, where the joy of the guests was shared by Jesus and His holy Mother.

And behold the happiness which the confraternity procures, for it affords its members the succors best adapted to facilitate the sanctification of their state.

7th. Seventh advantage—numerous indulgences. It would be superfluous to remind you of the value of this spiritual largess which the Church gives to the faithful under the name of indulgences, and how useful they are to the living and the dead. Now, the Sovereign Pon-

tiffs, in their signal love for sodalities, have enriched them with all the indulgences which piety could desire. The present volume contains a long list of them. I shall only call your attention to the plenary indulgence which all the sodalists can gain on days of general reunion, and that which is granted them at the hour of death.

8th. Eighth advantage—a collection of all the blessings which a Christian can desire here below. The Saviour shows us a treasure, a root and principle of all blessings, under the image of a pearl of great price which a merchant, He tells us, sold all that He had to acquire; for once he obtains the pearl he possesses in it all treasures, all riches. This pearl of great price, says St. Bernard, is the religious state—the state of him who, by the vows of religion, consecrates himself wholly and irrevocably to God. But we can with good reason apply the words of the holy doctor to the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin, where the faithful devote themselves to the service of God by consecrating themselves to the Virgin Mother of God. We may say with St. Bernard: "What is this pearl of great price, if not the holy and immaculate confraternity where one lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more promptly, proceeds more cautiously, reaps more graces, enjoys more peace, possesses a pledge of a hap-

pier death, of a shorter purgatory, a richer reward in heaven?"—*Hæc est religio sancta, pura, immaculata, in qua homo vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit velocius, incedit cautius, irroratur frequentius, quiescit securius, moritur fiducialius, purgatur citius, præmiatur copiosius.*

One only needs to read each one of these statements to feel how they are verified in the confraternity. They are, moreover, confirmed by experience and facts. How many times have I heard from the lips of others and witnessed myself how beautiful is the death of a true Child of Mary, how consoling and precious it is before God! God has even frequently been pleased to manifest by prodigies how great is Mary's solicitude for her children when leaving this world, and how she helps them to consummate their life by the holiest death.

CHAPTER III.

DUTIES OF SODALISTS.

Audi, fili mi, disciplinam patris tui, et ne dimittas legem matris tuæ (My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother).—PROV. i. 8.

IF the sodality affords great advantages it also imposes upon those who enjoy them a condition, which is the fulfilment of certain duties.

Every man has special duties, which vary according to the position he occupies. A sodalist, then, also has duties to fulfil; but let us hasten to say that they are sweet and agreeable.

Duty is a great thing; a still greater thing is the love and fulfilment of duty.

What is duty? It is all that a servant must do in obedience to the will and desire of his master. *When you shall have done*, says Jesus Christ, *all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do* (Luke xvii. 10)—that is, we have done our duty. Now, since God is our Master and we are His servants, His will

and all He asks of us according to our state constitute our duties.

We understand, then, that *duty* differs from *amusement*. Duty is what pleases our Master; amusement is what pleases us—in other words, duty is what is necessary, amusement is what will please. What further is duty? It is man's rule. A reasonable creature needs a rule to guide himself with wisdom. Now, the true rule of conduct, as simple as it is perfect, is, to do one's duty. Behold the guiding thread in the labyrinth of life, the golden line traced for us by the finger of God. Happy he whose first end is duty, and who faithfully follows in this noble path! His life will be regulated with prudence, happiness will accompany his steps, and his name will be uttered with respect.

Again what is duty? It is the great basis of the moral perfection of man. Whoever fulfils his duties leaves nothing to be desired; he is perfect. Has your heart a noble ambition? Do you aspire to be a perfect sodalist of the Blessed Virgin? You have but one thing to do: devote yourself to the perfect fulfilment of the duties of a member of the sodality, of a Child of Mary.

But what are these duties? First of all let us repeat what we have already said: these duties are not onerous. Mary's yoke, like that of her divine Son, is sweet and her burden

light. It consists of three things: the observance of the rule, exemplary conduct, fidelity to the act of consecration.

I. Rules. The rules of the congregation, so beautiful and pious that they seem to have been dictated by the Blessed Virgin herself, were approved by Pope Sixtus V. in his bull *Omnipotentis Dei* of the 5th of January, 1586, and given to the primary confraternity of Rome, as well as to all affiliated thereto.

These rules, to which it is permitted to add local statutes, should be observed with religious fidelity; not that they oblige under pain of sin, like the commandments of the Church, but because they are approved by the Holy See, are pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, and form the basis of the sodality and the principle of its life and prosperity. Moreover, in entering this pious association one explicitly binds himself to observe its statutes and rules. One is bound, then, to observe these holy rules through a principle of honor and fidelity, through love for the Blessed Virgin, and through love for the confraternity. As to the rules themselves, they may be summed up in certain prescribed duties: 1st, towards God and the Blessed Virgin; 2d, towards the confraternity; 3d, towards one's self; 4th, towards one's neighbor.

1st. Towards God and the Blessed Virgin

the rules prescribe daily prayers, Mass, the frequentation of the sacraments, and faithful attendance at the meetings.

2d. Towards the sodality: you must love it, love its prosperity, its honor; love all its members with a sincere and fraternal affection, having at heart the union and concord of all; manifest love and particular regard for its officers. This charity should be manifested by deeds, and even by sacrifices, particularly when fellow-members are ill or die.

3d. Towards one's self. Our duties towards ourselves require that our conduct should be edifying and exemplary; that we should avoid worldly companions, reprehensible amusements, dangerous or doubtful books.

4th. Towards our neighbor. We must earnestly aid and share in the works of charity and zeal which circumstances require.

This is a summary of the sodality rules, which you will read entire in your Manual with the greatest profit.

II. Exemplary conduct. We apply this term not to a simply regular, Christian, irreproachable life, but to a life which impresses others by the splendor of a regularity worthy to serve as an example. Such should be Children of Mary's lives. The Blessed Virgin tells them all, as Jesus Christ did His apostles: *So let your light shine before men that they may see your good*

works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Therefore they must serve as an example to their neighbor by their punctuality, their charity, their patience, their modesty, and their reserve in their words.

And why should the conduct of sodalists be so edifying? Because the sanctity of Mary, whose children they are, and the honor of the sodality of which they are members, make it an obligation for them. The misconduct of a child grieves a mother; its virtue rejoices and honors her.

Does this mean that all upon entering the society shall be free from faults or shall at once become models of virtue? Such is not our idea; but the perfection of which we speak is the end which each one should endeavor to attain.

III. Fidelity to the act of consecration. The act of consecration, dear sodalists, is an engagement of honor which you have contracted at the foot of the altar in the presence of the angels and all the members of the confraternity. In begging the Virgin Mary to be your protectress in life and in death you promised on your part that you would henceforth honor her as your mother, and that you would never say a word or be guilty of an action against her honor. This engagement contains a triple promise, which it is well you should thoroughly

understand in order to fulfil it perfectly. Here it is:

1st. To ever preserve a filial love for Mary which impels you to frequently invoke her and avoid all that could displease her, according to the words of St. Bernard: *In your perils, your trials, your waverings, think of Mary, invoke Mary; let the name of Mary be ever in your heart and on your lips; but to merit her intercession do not fail to imitate her example.*

2d. To utter no word against her honor; such are too free, unbecoming words, unworthy of a Child of Mary.

3d. To be guilty of no actions against her honor; such are culpable actions, particularly those which tend to tarnish the splendor of the virtue dearest to her virgin heart. Children of Mary, behold your noble and glorious duties! Your good Mother will not fail to assist you in fulfilling them, and in the faithful accomplishment of them you will enjoy all the advantages which the confraternity promises. *Hoc fac et vives*—This do and thou shalt live (Luke x. 28).

CHAPTER IV.

HAPPINESS OF THE FAITHFUL SODALIST.

Si hæc scitis, beati critis, si fueritis ea (If you know these things you shall be blessed if you do them).—JOHN xiii. 17.

HAPPINESS! Behold the perpetual aspiration of the human heart! We desire it even in this fleeting life. Can we attain it? Is there happiness on earth?

Perfect happiness, which is called beatitude, is only found in heaven; it is the portion of the elect; but there is upon earth an imperfect happiness which Jesus Christ has revealed to us, and which is no less true happiness for being mingled with the cross and tears. Whose is this happiness? All true Christians share in it, and, consoling thought, the Children of Mary have the largest share. Yes, the largest portion of true happiness in this world is reserved to faithful sodalists. What are the elements of this happiness?

Here are the five principal: the sweetness of piety, a good conscience, the satisfaction of accomplished duty, consolation in adversity, the pledge of a happy death.

1st. The sweetness of piety. Piety is a hidden manna which causes the soul to taste all sweetness. We understand by piety that gift of the Holy Spirit which not only floods the mind with the light of faith but warms the heart with the fire of love from above. Then we love Jesus and His holy Mother; we love to refresh ourselves at the divine fountains of the sacraments and prayer. Oh! how sweet is the interior converse of a soul which prays, which has the happiness of speaking with Jesus and Mary. How enrapturing are the canticles of the sanctuary in those delightful moments spent at the foot of the altar! Then we may exclaim with David: *How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord! Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands in the tabernacles of sinners* (Ps. lxxxiii.)

2d. A good conscience. We understand by a good conscience one that is pure of all mortal sin, which reproaches us with no grave fault and bears testimony that we are the friends and children of God. Nothing is sweeter than this testimony of a good conscience; it fills the soul with a serenity, calmness, and peace which surpass all exterior enjoyments. *A secure mind is like a continual feast* (Prov. xv. 15), truly says the proverb. *Contentment is better than riches*; yes, it surpasses all treasures, all honors, all the inebri-

ating pleasures of the world. No, no; fortune and opulence do not give happiness: witness Solomon, who found in them but vanity and affliction of spirit (Eccles. ii.) Witness the wicked rich man who lived but to feast, and who rejected the poor; behold him overwhelmed with eternal shame and buried in hell (Luke xv.) Witness still the young Polonais, who, in the midst of every worldly advantage, is so overwhelmed with *ennui* that he finds life an unbearable burden; he thought, alas! to rid himself of it by suicide. No, no; happiness is not from without, nor does it lie in exterior blessings: its seat is the heart and its source a good conscience. *Non est pax impiis* (Isaias lvii. 21).

3d. The satisfaction of accomplished duty. Nothing is so sweet as the feeling in the heart of a Christian when he can say with the divine Master: *Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do* (John xvii. 4). How happy one is at evening after a well-spent day! How happy we shall be in the decline of life, when, looking back upon our days, we shall see that they have been full of merit for heaven!

Whatever men may say or do against us, whatever happen us, we are happy if to soul and conscience we can say: I have done what I ought; I have done my duty.

Is it not from this source that the happiness of Christian families flows? We understand by

a truly Christian family one where each member fulfils his duties before God in a spirit of faith and love—the father and mother govern the household and give good example ; the children obey their parents and love one another. A spirit of union, peace, industry, and joy reign among them. Nowhere do they find a happiness equal to that in their home. Therefore all without exception, parents and children, love to find themselves gathered together in the midst of the family ; it is there and not abroad, at the fireside and not in worldly excursions, theatres, strange drawing-rooms, that they taste those innocent and pure joys of which the principle is none other than the Christian fulfilment of duty.

Now, since every faithful sodalist is necessarily devoted to his duty, since he is a man of duty and not of pleasure, with this maxim as his own, *The necessary before the useful, the useful before the agreeable*, it follows that he cannot fail to enjoy these sweet satisfactions.

4th. Consolation in trials. No one in this life escapes the law of suffering, and the sodalist, like every one else, has his cross to bear ; but it is lightened by great consolations. Whatever may be the cause of his trials, whether it be reverse of fortune, wrongs, humiliations, loss of kindred, a fault into which he has fallen, interior struggles, corporal infirmities, or any other

form of adversity, he has friends who console him and sustain his courage. Who are these friends? They are the brother members of the sodality, the director of the sodality, the Blessed Virgin herself, and her divine Son. They are true friends, who will not abandon him in adversity. He can address himself with confidence to them; they will hold forth a helping hand to him, or they will at least reanimate him with the consoling words, Have confidence! *To them that love God all things work together unto good. After the night comes the day, after the storm comes the calm, after trial peace and joy.*

5th. The pledge of a happy death. Of all the graces which God grants to men, the most excellent, without doubt, is a happy death: *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus* (Ps. cxv.) It is the gate of paradise, the entrance to glory. This grace is assured to the faithful sodalist.

Who can doubt that Mary hears this prayer which her children repeat in the act of consecration: *Assist me in all my actions, and abandon me not at the hour of my death;* and this other which we constantly address to her all our lives: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death?*

Think you it is possible that a Mother so full of solicitude for her children during life could

forget them at the hour of death? She helps them to accept sickness with resignation, to worthily receive the sacraments, to make to God the very meritorious sacrifice of life, to gain the plenary indulgence, and to leave this world purified, as far as it is possible, from all stain, and acquitted of all debt to the divine justice.

Hence the beautiful and edifying deaths of Children of Mary to which all who have witnessed them can testify.

Courage, then, Children of Mary; be faithful to the holy obligations you have contracted towards your good Mother and rely upon her for your happy death; the death of her children cannot but be precious in the sight of the Lord. *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus.*

Behold the happiness reserved to faithful sodalists! Should we not earnestly endeavor to merit it?

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Si vos manseritis in sermone meo, vere discipuli mei eritis (If you continue in my word you shall be my disciples indeed). —JOHN viii. 31.

THE great end of the sodality is to strengthen and perfect its members in the Christian life.

To appreciate the beauty, the grandeur, the sovereign usefulness of this end it is necessary to form a just idea of the Christian life, and to consider it in its true light without prejudice or misapprehension.

What is the Christian life? How is it made practicable and easy?

I. What is the Christian life? When we turn our eyes to various parts of the globe we behold a great number of people distinguished from others by holy baptism and the sign of the cross. These are Christians; the majority of them are subject to the Roman Pontiff; these are Catholics, who form the true Church of Jesus Christ.

But in this holy Church I observe two classes

very distinct one from the other—good Catholics and bad Catholics. These last are careless of the duties imposed upon them by baptism; the others lead a truly Christian life, fulfil their duties, live according to their belief, and are faithful to their baptismal obligations.

In fact, the Christian life consists in doing and practising what is promised in baptism, what is taught in the gospel, what is prescribed by the commandments of God and the Church.

It is one thing to lead a Christian life and another to bear the name of Christian. All those who are baptized are called Christians, but those only lead a Christian life who fulfil what they promised in baptism—namely, to follow the law of Jesus Christ and ever to fly His capital enemy, the devil, and all his works and pomps.

Nor is the Christian life the same thing as belief or Christian faith; there are so many who believe but do not live up to their faith. To live a Christian life is to practise what one believes, to regulate one's conduct and morals according to the teachings of faith.

The Christian life is opposed to a worldly life. The latter follows no other rule but the caprice of passion, of fashion, the allurements of the world, and the demands of selfishness. The rule of the Christian life, on the contrary, is composed of the maxims of the Gospel, the law of

God, duty, conscience, the will of God and His good pleasure; it is not a life of egotism, but a life of charity.

What more is the Christian life? The Christian life on earth is a preparation for the glorious life of heaven. Through the grace of God and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ we are destined for eternal glory, to enter the dwelling of the King of kings, to take our place among the princes of the heavenly court. But to attain this new and sublime state we need a preparation which shall change us, so to speak, into heavenly men. This preparation is the Christian life. Jesus Christ came upon earth to teach this life to those who wish to attain heaven. Placed in the midst of the world, where he perpetually abides like a sun to enlighten the human race, He tells us all: Heaven is open to you, but to enter you must lead a life worthy of heaven. Look upon me. I am the heavenly model; follow my example, observe my law, and having become, like me, heavenly men, you shall be worthy to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The Christian life, then, is a preparation for heaven.

The type of the Christian life, moreover, is Jesus Christ, of whom His true disciples are faithful imitations. To see the Christian life in all its splendor we must turn our eyes to the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and all

true Catholics who, from apostolic times to the present day, have made open profession of their holy religion. Look at this brilliant cortége of true Christians; they belong to all ranks of society and to all conditions of life; they are the elect of the human race.

The Christian life is the most honorable and beautiful life; it is justly compared to the passage of a star whose path is marked but by light. *The path of the just*, says the Holy Spirit, *as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day* (Prov. iv. 18). The life of the sinner, on the contrary, is *darksome* and leaves after it but dirt and smoke.

Having but one life, must we not spend it in the most beautiful path? Now, the most beautiful path is the Christian life.

The Christian life makes men happy in spite of the crosses they have to bear: *I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation*, said the apostle (2 Cor. vii. 4). Good Christians are happy because their conscience is at peace, because they receive their trials from the hand of God and they convert them into merit for heaven. *Blessed are the undefiled who walk in the way of the Lord*, says the prophet (Ps. cxviii. 1).

The Christian life forms and tempers the character. Nothing is so beautiful as a strong, noble, generous character. We esteem it, we love it and confide in it. What, then, gives

man this beautiful character? What teaches him the great virtues of which it is formed—probity, courage, devotion, generosity even towards his enemies? Is it not the spirit of the Gospel? *Give*, says the Saviour, *to him that asketh of thee. Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell. Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.* Filled with this spirit, the apostles *went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.* What greatness of soul! Contrast this with worldlings plunged in sensuality, abandoned to egotism, slaves of opinion, slaves of human respect; compare their character with that of true Christians: on one side you see but cowardice and baseness, while on the other shine nobility of soul, courage, and a generosity which inspires respect and love.

The Christian life, finally, is an absolute necessity. *If thou wilt enter into life*, says the Saviour, *keep the commandments* (Matt. xix. 17). It is not sufficient to believe; we must also practise. Faith is necessary as the root, and works as the fruits which God requires of us. It is true that Jesus Christ has said, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*, but we must here understand an efficacious faith, fruit-

ful in works. Elsewhere He tells us: *He that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;* and *every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire* (Matt. vii. 19, 21).

Such is the necessity of the Christian life; such also is its sovereign excellence.

II. Practice. If the Christian life is beautiful and desirable, is it not, on the other hand, very difficult? Does it not require great efforts and great sacrifices? To live a Christian life is it not necessary to triumph over our passions, our repugnances, the tyranny of human respect, the seductions of the world? Has not the Saviour said, *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away?*

Yes, our Saviour spoke thus, and He even said that this triumph was humanly impossible; for one day He said to His disciples: *Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* The disciples, impressed by these words, said to one another: *Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus, looking on them, saith: With men it is impossible; but not with God, for all things are possible with God* (Mark x. 24–27).

Then it is impossible for man of himself to

faithfully fulfil the duties which the Gospel imposes. Resisting temptation, overcoming pride, anger, concupiscence, practising chastity, forgiving injuries, praying for one's enemies, are acts which are frequently beyond man's natural strength. But God offers him supernatural succor, through which all becomes practicable and easy.

This divine succor is called *grace*, actual grace, the necessity and power of which it is important to well understand. Without grace we can do nothing for salvation; with grace we can do all things. *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me*, says the apostle. How did the saints practise their heroic virtues? How did the martyrs win their admirable victories? How do so many contemporary Christians unfalteringly follow after Jesus? By means of grace.

The grace of God, then, is necessary; but how is it to be obtained? To obtain grace two conditions are necessary: 1st, to avoid placing any obstacles to it; 2d, to employ the means God gives us.

1st. The obstacles to grace are the occasions of sin to which we voluntarily expose ourselves, or certain sensual satisfactions to which we are too much attached.

2d. The means are prayer and the sacraments—true divine sources whence we may

draw grace after the example of all the saints.

It is thus we become strong with the strength of God to triumph over enemies, to fulfil duties, to practise all the virtues of the Christian life in order to win the palm and crown which are its reward.

CHAPTER VI.

SOLID VIRTUE.

Assimilabitur viro sapienti, qui ædificavit domum suam supra petram (He shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock).—MATT. vii. 24

WE have the happiness, dear sodalists, to love virtue, to appreciate it, and to be won by its beauty; therefore we desire to enrich our hearts more and more with so great a blessing. But if we would realize this holy desire we must aim at true and solid virtue.

Too frequently we see weak and wavering virtue which, like a house built upon the sand, crumbles under the first shock of temptation. We want solid virtue which, like a house built upon a rock, resists the waves and the storms.

By solid virtue we understand that which overcomes temptations, endures trials, perseveres in labor. A Roman hero one day said to his enemies, astonished at his strength of soul: *Facere et pati fortia Romanum est*—"It belongs to a Roman to act and suffer with courage." Solid virtue realizes these words, but

realizes them far better than pagan heroes, and we can say in all truth it belongs to *Christian virtue to act and suffer with invincible constancy.*

What are the principles of this solidity? What are the signs or characters of solid virtue?

I. Principles of solidity. An edifice, to be solid, must have a firm foundation, immovable columns; a tree, to resist the winds, must have deep roots. This foundation and these roots are the principles of solidity. True virtue has similar principles, which are: faith, hatred of sin, humility, confidence in God, and prayer.

1st. Faith. The holy Council of Trent, speaking of faith, says that it is the root and foundation of justification, consequently of the Christian life and virtue. St. Paul recommends the Colossians to continue grounded, and settled, and immovable in the faith: *In fide fundati et stabiles* (Col. i. 23).

To thus serve as a foundation faith should be lively and firm. It should be as firm as that of the apostles. Think what must have been the faith of those men who had seen Jesus Christ, who had seen Him powerful in word and deed like the true Son of God, who saw Him risen from the dead, who saw Him ascend into heaven; how firm must have been their faith! Certainly it surpassed in firmness all other faith,

even that which we have of the existence of Rome. Therefore see how they speak to the faithful: Believe firmly, brethren, they tell them, for *we declare unto you that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled* (1 John i. 1). *We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having been made eye-witness of His majesty* (2 Peter i. 16). *This is the victory which overcometh, our faith* (1 John v. 4). Yes, when we believe in a hell, in a heaven, in the inestimable rewards of a future life, and we are penetrated with this faith, oh! then we are powerful to despise the world and triumph over it.

Faith should be firm; it should also be lively. I understand by this that we see the things of faith not in the vague distance, but near, with a clear vision. Now, this clear, luminous, and lively faith is acquired by Christian instruction, by good reading and the attentive consideration of the truths which God has revealed to us.

This lively and firm faith constitutes the first principle of the solidity of virtue.

2d. The second consists in hatred of sin. We speak particularly of mortal sin, and we say that a supreme horror of it is necessary; so that whatever be proposed to us, if it imply a mortal sin, it is a proposition rejected in advance,

and one which admits neither examination nor discussion. To propose to a Christian that he sin mortally is to invite him to cast himself into a fiery furnace. Can he in reason fail to instantly reject it? This supreme aversion, this hatred of sin, is a principle of solid virtue; and it is because it is too frequently lacking that we see so many sad falls. The Holy Spirit gives us to understand this when he tells us: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Ps. cx. 10). By fear of the Lord is meant the fear of offending God. It is the beginning and foundation of wisdom and of all Christian virtue.

3d. Third principle of solidity—Christian humility. The saints and doctors present us humility as the second foundation of the Christian life. Faith, they tell us, is the foundation-stone which must sustain the edifice; but humility penetrates into the depths of the earth until it reaches the firm ground upon which the foundation must be laid. He who humbles himself builds solidly, and the edifice of his virtue will reach the skies: *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted* (Matt. xxiii. 12). St. Peter gives us the reason of this when he tells us: *God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace* (1 Peter v. 5).

4th. Fourth principle of solidity—confidence in God. We are of ourselves so weak in vir-

tue that, abandoned to our own strength, we could not but fail; the reed, bending before every wind, is an image of our strength. But if the hand of God touch us, our weakness will be turned into strength and the reed will become a column. *Without me*, says our Saviour, *you can do nothing* (John xv. 5); and St. Paul: *I have labored more abundantly than they; yet not I, but the grace of God with me* (1 Cor. xv. 10). *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*

Now, we obtain this helping grace, we borrow this strength of God, by a constant and filial confidence in His merciful assistance. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion; they shall not be moved.* This confidence, besides securing us the assistance of God, preserves us from discouragement, the too frequent prelude to falls and defections.

5th. Fifth principle of stability—prayer. The holy exercise of prayer is the complement of confidence and its natural expression. When we look upon God as our protector and support we implore Him in all our needs; and, our needs being continual, our prayer must be continual. Hence our Saviour's law: *We ought always to pray* (Luke xviii. 1). *Watch ye, and pray*, He tells us elsewhere, *that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). A Christian without prayer is like a soldier without arms on the day

of battle; by prayer he covers himself with the armor of God. Therefore whoever is not assiduous in prayer will be constantly exposed to spiritual dangers, while he who has a spirit of prayer cannot perish.

These are the principles which produce and sustain solid virtue.

II. Characteristics of solid virtue. The characteristics by which we recognize solid virtue, the signs which manifest this solidity, are patience, contempt of human respect, a spirit of sacrifice, generosity in overcoming one's self, constancy in good.

1st. Patience. Feeble virtue, encountering contradictions, whether they come from persons or things, breaks out into complaints and murmurs, becomes discouraged, and frequently forgets itself completely. We see men, on the contrary, enduring everything—not only slight offences, failings, want of regard, but injuries, calumnies, the greatest outrages—without recriminating or uttering a complaint. In the longest and most painful illnesses you would say they were without pain, so superior are they to their trials. Behold the patience which is an evident sign of solid virtue. *The patient man*, says Holy Scripture, *is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities* (Prov. xvi. 32).

2d. Contempt of human respect. If it be an

act of cowardice to bend under the yoke of human respect, it is an act of courage to trample it under foot. True virtue founded upon deep convictions has no other rule of conduct but the law of the Sovereign Master, of which it never loses sight. The true Christian, with his eyes fixed upon this Supreme Majesty who has drawn the universe out of nothing, and before whom all men are but dust and ashes, knows not what it is to fear or feel the least shame in obeying Him; and he says with the apostles: *We ought to obey God rather than men* (Acts v. 29). *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard* (Acts iv. 20).

3d. A spirit of sacrifice. We understand here by sacrifice depriving ourselves of something which costs us, that we may give it to God or our neighbor. It is a sacrifice when we encroach upon necessities to give to good works; when we give our strength, our time, our means; when we deprive ourselves of rest, of an amusement, of a lawful satisfaction, for the cause of virtue. We distinguish sacrifices of free choice and necessary sacrifices—that is, those which circumstances, or rather God Himself, sometimes impose on us, and which, accepted with love, are most meritorious. The one and the other are the effects, the manifestations of solid virtue.

4th. Generosity in overcoming one's self. The

grand maxim of St. Ignatius was to overcome one's self—*Vince te ipsum.* Overcoming one's self is conquering one's repugnance when there is a duty to be fulfilled, a virtue to practise. There are some who are pious, faithful to their duties, as long as they experience any attraction; but let never so little weariness arise, let there be repugnances to overcome, they yield and fall back. Such is not the conduct of solid Christians; it is sufficient for them to recognize a duty, an action in accordance with God's will, for them to be inflamed with a noble ardor and to exclaim: *God wills it! I must overcome myself! Forward, in God's name! Do what is right, come what may!*

5th. Constancy. There are men who begin much and achieve nothing; they are frivolous minds which our Saviour signalled in the parable of the sower. Some of the seed, He says, fell upon stony ground where it had not much earth, and it sprang up immediately because it had no deepness of earth, but when the sun came it withered away because it had no root. Such is he who hears the word of God and receives it at first with joy; but as it has no root in his heart he only perseveres for a time; in the day of tribulation he fails.

When, on the contrary, virtue is solid and plunges its roots into the depths of the soul, it gives perseverance and constancy. Before

beginning the true Christian reflects, raising his eyes to God, and when he has recognized the divine will he begins and continues the enterprise, and nothing can arrest him. If his success does not correspond to his efforts, if he stumble in the way, he rises undaunted and continues what he knows to be pleasing to God's will, remembering these words: *He who perseveres to the end shall be saved.*

Such are the principles and signs of solid virtue.

May we strengthen it more and more in our hearts! This happiness will be ours if we zealously endeavor to acquire it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother.

CHAPTER VII.

CAUSES OF DEFECTION.

Multi discipulorum ejus abierunt retro (After this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him).—JOHN vi. 67.

ONE of the saddest spectacles in the eyes of faith is the defection of so many faithful who, after having walked under the standard of Christ, cowardly forsake it and adopt that of the world and the devil. Nothing grieves the Heart of God more than to see the perfidy of Judas thus renewed; nothing is also more unfortunate than the fate of him who thus imitates Judas by selling his divine Master to His enemies.

To preserve ourselves from such a misfortune let us consider the causes of these deplorable defections. I distinguish three principal causes—abandoning piety, rashness in exposing one's self to temptation, dissipation.

I. Abandoning piety. We here understand by piety the exercises and practices of Christian piety, particularly those prescribed by the rules of the sodality—namely, daily prayers,

the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, the word of God, and pious reading.

As long as we are faithful to these exercises we will not fall, or if we do fall we will quickly rise again. But as soon as one abandons them he deserts his standard and falls into the power of the enemy. This is not a simple fall: it is a desertion.

Then can these practices be essential to the Christian life? Is it not sufficient to observe the commandments, to hear Mass on Sunday, to receive Holy Communion at Easter? That is sufficient to strictly fulfil the laws of the Church, but usually it does not suffice to enable one to live a Christian life. Those who confine themselves to acts of strict obligation commonly fall into mortal sin, continue in this state, and end by throwing off even these last restraints of religion. Here is the reason:

The practices of which we speak are the food of the soul; if you deprive the soul of nourishment it is weakened like the body deprived of food, becomes incapable to resist the assaults of the enemy, to fulfil its duties, to walk in the path of virtue. When the disciples asked our Lord to dismiss the multitude which had followed Him into the desert, Jesus answered: *If I shall send them away fasting to their home they will faint in the way* (Mark viii. 3). Ah! if so many souls faint in the way

of virtue it is because they are weak for want of food.

What would happen to a lamp if we neglected to replenish the oil? to a fire if we did not feed it with wood? to a clock, no matter how perfect its organization, if we forgot to wind it? The lamp and the fire would be extinguished, the clock would soon stop. It is the same with a man's soul when he abandons piety, only the consequences are more serious.

Nothing, then, is more dangerous than to abandon pious practices; that is why the devil makes every effort to lead us to this abandonment. To succeed better he begins by degrees and induces us, for various pretexts, to omit something from time to time, then a little more for slighter reasons, until we fall into a habit of dispensing ourselves and we end by abandoning all. Ah! be on your guard against this snare; let us hold to our pious practices with inviolable fidelity.

II. Rashness in exposing ourselves to danger. *He that loveth danger*, says the Holy Spirit, *shall perish in it* (Ecclus. iii. 27). The danger of which there is question here is commonly called occasions of sin, which consist in exterior circumstances, persons, or things which of themselves or because of our weakness lead us into mortal sin. When I fall into mortal sin, every time, or almost every time, that I find my-

self in certain circumstances, there is for me what is called a proximate occasion of mortal sin in such circumstances. To expose one's self to such a danger is a mortal sin of itself; to refuse to fly such a danger is to have neither repentance nor firm purpose of amendment, and to be incapable of receiving absolution for sin.

The most frequent occasions of sin at the present day are bad reading, the theatre, dances, worldly companions, unbecoming discourse. How many young people have been shipwrecked on these shoals! How many unfortunate souls have glided into corruption and unbelief for having approached the border of this abyss, the occasion of sin!

Then we must fly dangerous occasions at any cost, at any sacrifice. *If thy hand scandalize thee*, says our Saviour, *cut it off; it is better for thee to enter life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire* (Mark ix. 42).

And do not say: I have nothing to fear; I am strong enough to resist; I will not fall again. Once the danger is proved, once your confessor, pointing it out to you, has shown you your duty, it is an illusion to think that you can expose yourself to it with impunity. As well say: I will go into the fire, but I will not allow myself to be burned; I will sleep in the den of the lion, but I will not let him devour me. Experience too fully proves the infallible

words of the Holy Spirit: *He that loveth danger shall perish in it* (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Then fly danger; it is the true Christian prudence, which may be regarded as a pledge of salvation. For if the rash man who loves danger shall perish in it, the prudent man who flies danger shall not perish. It was this principle which prompted a servant of God to make this significant reply: Would you, he asks, escape the dangers of the world and save your soul? Firstly, fly; secondly, fly; thirdly, fly. Flying danger, you shall not perish.

III. Dissipation. A third cause of defection and spiritual ruin is dissipation. We here give the name dissipation to that state in which a soul permits itself to be absorbed by worldly affairs, worldly cares, news, and all exterior things to the point of neglecting its religious duties and failing to reflect upon eternal things.

The absence of reflection is fatal to souls. *With desolation is all the land made desolate*, says the prophet, *because there is none that considereth in the heart* (Jer. xii. 11). Oh! if we were to think on death, on eternity, on the nothingness of all that is not God. If we were to think of the terrible chastisements reserved for sin! If we were to raise our eyes we would see, like Damocles, a sword suspended over our heads, and we would hasten to make our safety certain; but because we no longer raise our eyes

we do not see the danger, which, alas! is no less imminent.

The salutary reflection of which we speak consists in hearing the word of God, in pious reading—particularly reflective reading—meditation, in daily examination of conscience, in making a preparation for death from time to time in obedience to our Saviour, who tells us: *Be ye ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come.*

One will say, perhaps, that he cannot apply his mind to pious reflection. This is a mistake. Reflection, though difficult, particularly for one who allows his senses perfect liberty, nevertheless is not impossible, and it is sufficient to will to withdraw ourselves for a time from the tumult of exterior things for the mind to perceive the things of God.

One will say also that he has not time to apply himself to pious exercises; business, he objects, absorbs all my time and all my care. You are mistaken, and your error is the cause of all the evil we are here combating. You are mistaken: God and your soul, and not your temporal affairs, should be your first care. *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* Think you, then, it will suffice you to say, *I had not time?* Will the Supreme Judge admit this excuse? You had not time, will He say, to work out your

salvation—you, who enjoyed twenty, thirty, forty years of life? In vain do you allege that temporal things absorbed your time; your first care should have been eternal things, for which I placed you on earth. Have I not said to all that they must *seek first the kingdom of God?* And before all things you have sought the goods of this world. For this reason you are without excuse; you are lost through your own fault. If you had given yourself a suitable time for recollection you would have found in it a safeguard against the dissipation which has caused your ruin.

Behold, then, the triple cause of all defections: negligence, rashness, dissipation—three shoals which we cannot fear sufficiently. Let us keep our bark from them and ask the Blessed Virgin to help us to constantly avoid them. Then we shall not be of the number of those who desert the standard of virtue, but shall persevere to the end, faithful to Jesus, our King, and His divine Mother, our august Queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

HATRED OF SIN.

Initium sapientiæ timor Domini (The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom).—Ps. cx. 10.

THE wisdom of which the Holy Spirit here speaks is no other than justice, virtue, the Christian life which Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom, came to teach men. It has for beginning the fear of God; that is, it begins by the fear of God, as the building of an edifice begins with the foundation which is to sustain it. But what must we understand by fear of God so important and so essential? This salutary fear is the fear of offending God by sin; that is, *hatred of sin*, particularly mortal sin. Without hatred of sin there is no true virtue; and unless this hatred be deeply rooted in the soul virtue cannot be firm and solid, just as a tree cannot stand firm in the earth unless it have deep roots. One day, walking in the country, I saw a tree overturned by the wind, while all the others remained standing. It was a vigorous tree, planted in good ground, but it had fallen with its roots upturned be-

cause they were not sufficiently deep. The others had resisted the storm because of their roots, which penetrated into the depths of the ground. Thus to be strong in virtue we should be deeply penetrated with hatred for sin. To this end let us consider, I. The necessity of this hatred; II. Its qualities; III. The manner of acquiring it.

I. Necessity. Hatred of sin is as necessary to the Christian life as the foundation is to an edifice. *Every one*, says the Saviour, *that heareth these my words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock. And every one that heareth these my words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof* (Matt. vii. 24–27). Observe that the house to be built is the Christian life according to the teachings of our Saviour; the floods and the winds which beat upon it are the passions, the temptations, and the scandals of the world; the house resists all if it be founded upon a rock, but it crumbles completely if it be built upon sand. We understand what this disastrous fall of a Christian signifies; but what are we to under-

stand by this rock upon which the Christian life must be founded not to yield to the storms of life?

This rock, this necessary foundation of virtue —what is it? *Initium sapentiæ timor Domini:* it is the fear of the Lord. Have you this strong and deep hatred in your heart? Your virtue will resist assault. Have you not this holy fear, or is it weak and undecided? Your house is built upon sand, and, assailed by temptation, it will fall to the ground. Whence is it that so many Christians sin so easily, even after confession relapse so quickly into the same sins? Alas! they are not penetrated with the hatred of which we speak. Then it is absolutely necessary that hatred for sin be deeply rooted in the heart.

II. Quality. But what should this hatred be to give to virtue immovable solidity? We understand that it must be strong and solid itself, and to be so it must be a *sovereign* hatred.

A sovereign hatred of mortal sin consists in a horror and absolute aversion for this supreme evil; in a determined will to resist it wherever we meet it; and, the moment there is question of anything implying mortal sin, to reject it with horror without admitting any deliberation. Thus a sensible man free to choose could not deliberate in the presence of death on the border of a precipice or before a funeral pile. If a wild

beast sprang towards you, ready to devour you, or an assassin to murder you, would you need to deliberate upon what you had to do? If a rich man led you to the top of a high mountain, and, showing you a terrible precipice, said to you: Ask what you will, were it a kingdom, I will give it to you on condition you cast yourself down this precipice—think you you would need to reflect before rejecting this insensate proposition? If the same man, rich and powerful, placed you before a fiery furnace, like that of Babylon, and said to you: You shall be king, and the whole world shall be yours, provided you consent to be burned alive in this furnace—would you need to deliberate before rejecting this foolish solicitor with horror and contempt? No, no; when there is question of death, under whatever form it may be presented, however it may be veiled, we fly from it with horror by an instinct of nature alone. And when mortal sin presents itself under any form whatever —pleasure, honor, pecuniary profit—is it not death? Is it not the death of the soul, the eternal death of hell, which is offered us for a miserable temporal advantage? Is it not the abyss of hell which is opened before us, is it not the eternal fire into which you are invited to cast yourself? And you hesitate to reject such an insensate proposition? But I am offered pleasures and riches. Ah! were you offered the

whole world could you, without madness, hesitate a moment before rejecting it? Is there anything in the world for which you would consent to be burned alive, not in the furnace of Babylon, but in the fire of hell, which will never be extinguished? *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*

Then hatred of mortal sin is a firm and absolute purpose to reject this evil, without an instant's deliberation, the moment it presents itself.

III. Acquisition. To obtain this holy disposition, this sovereign hatred of mortal sin, we must, 1st, daily ask it of God, begging Him to penetrate us with His fear, that we may say with the prophet: *I have hated and abhorred iniquity* (Ps. cxviii. 163).

2d. A second means is to consider the malice of sin and its disastrous effects. Oh! if we could know what mortal sin is we would conceive such a horror of it that nothing in the world could lead us into it.

What, then, is mortal sin? It is a disobedience to God, a revolt against God, the rebellion of a creature who dares to defy his Creator and say to Him, *Non serviam*—I will not serve Thee. It is an outrage against the divine Majesty—an outrage like that of the Jews against the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a base

ingratitude; for man, who has received everything from God, not only makes Him no return for His benefits, but uses these same benefits to outrage his Benefactor! He is guilty of this ingratitude by using his means, his talents, his senses, his tongue as so many instruments of sin. The horrible Verger, having received an alms, used it to buy a poniard, which he plunged in the breast of his benefactor. This baseness is equalled, and even exceeded, by the ingratitude of the sinner.

What further is mortal sin? It is a supreme evil and the principle of all evil. *Sin maketh nations miserabl* (Prov. xiv. 34). Mortal sin is the supreme evil, because it is the only cause of eternal perdition. If any one among us—which God forbid!—must one day be excluded from heaven, what will be the cause? If any unfortunate soul among us—O Mary, preserve us!—must one day be cast into eternal fire, why will it be? Because of mortal sin, mortal sin only. . . .

Behold, then, the supreme evil, the sole cause of eternal misery. Therefore we must detest it, hate it, abhor it with a sovereign hatred.

O holy Virgin! obtain for thy children this salutary hatred; it will be the immovable basis of their virtue, the pledge of their perseverance unto the end.

CHAPTER IX.

PURITY OF CONSCIENCE.

Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt (Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God).—MATT. v. 8.

THE Holy Spirit frequently speaks to us in Scripture of purity of heart and soul. He presents it to us as a precious blessing worthy of all our desires. Therefore the holy Church, instructing us by the mouth of her ministers and her doctors, unceasingly recommends it to us, and tells us that purity of heart is one of the pivots of the Christian life. It is necessary, then, to know it well in order to love and practise it perfectly. To this end let us consider, I. What must be understood by purity of heart; II. What are its fruits; III. What practice it requires of us.

I. What must we understand by purity of heart? Purity of heart, which is also called purity of soul, purity of conscience, is the splendor of a soul unstained by sin From this announcement we understand that purity of heart is not the same thing as chastity. The

latter, which is called the angelic virtue, excludes the stains of the flesh—it is purity of body; the first, purity of heart, excludes the stains of all vices.

Our soul, cleansed by the waters of holy baptism, has been clothed again by the Holy Spirit with a supernatural purity called sanctifying grace—a divine garment of which the robe of baptism is the image and symbol. This garment communicates to the soul a splendor surpassing the brightness of gold, a whiteness effacing that of snow.

Unfortunately this whiteness may be tarnished, this splendor obscured, this beauty which enraptures the angels may be changed into deformity and ugliness. Scripture tells us of the beauty of a Judith, an Esther, a Joseph, an Absalom. Take a still greater beauty: does not a sickness, a wound, suffice to change all its graces into deformity? And particularly the hand of death touching beauty, does it not reduce it to slime and corruption? Now, the beauty of the soul is subject to similar changes and stains analogous to the corporal effects of sickness and death. A malady, a wound, leprosy, represent the stains of venial sins; death, corruption, the horrors of the tomb, offer an image of mortal sin, which our Saviour shows us in these words: *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like to whited sep-*

ulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness (Matt. xxiii. 27).

The purity of heart of which we speak is opposed to these stains as light is opposed to darkness; it preserves the soul from them, or, if it have already contracted them, it tends to make them disappear, removing first of all the corruption of mortal sin, and then diminishing more and more the stains of venial sin and all that could tarnish the lustre and whiteness of our souls.

Behold what we must understand by purity of heart. Let us now see how precious is this purity and what are its fruits.

II. Fruits of purity of heart. Purity of heart becomes for the soul which possesses it the principle of all blessings, since, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, it enraptures God by its beauty and attracts the abundance of His graces.

1st. In the Canticles the divine Spouse addresses the pure soul these affectionate words: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee* (Cant. iv. 7). *He that loveth cleanliness of heart shall have the king for his friend* (Prov. xxii. 11). God, who is purity and sanctity, cannot suffer sin before His face, as the sun cannot suffer darkness. *Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil,* cries the prophet to the Lord, *and thou*

canst not look on iniquity (Habac. i. 13). On the contrary, He fixes them with love on innocent souls who endeavor to imitate the immaculate Lamb, of whom the Father said: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

2d. Purity of heart abundantly attracts the gifts of grace. Just as men would not pour a precious liquid into an unclean vase, so God will not pour His gifts into our hearts until they are purified; but according as we purify them He pours into them His treasures of light and charity. It is for this reason that the Saviour says: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* They shall see God not only after this life in light and glory, but even in this world in the light of faith and grace; with marvellous clearness will they comprehend the word of God, will they see the will of God, the presence of God, the image of God, in all those who represent Him on earth.

Hence the facility for prayer which pure souls usually experience. Light from on high penetrates them as the rays of the sun penetrate a pure crystal. God's image is reflected in them as in a stainless mirror. Purity of conscience produces that calm, that interior security so favorable to the contemplation of heavenly things. It makes the soul, says St. Aloysius, resemble a quiet stream, in the unruffled surface of which the sun and stars are brilliant-

ly reflected. It is in a pure and calm heart, said St. Francis of Sales, that God manifests Himself, just as on a clear night, when the Lake of Geneva is very calm and the waters undisturbed by the wind, the heavens and stars are so well reflected therein that you behold as much beauty gazing down into the lake as you would looking up to the sky.

Among the disciples of our Saviour there was one, the young St. John, brother of St. James the Less, son of Zebedee the fisherman, and distinguished for his innocence and purity. Therefore see what favors he received from Jesus Christ. He was the object of His predilection and merited the name of the beloved disciple; at the Last Supper, placed beside our Saviour, he had the ineffable happiness of resting his head on the breast of his divine Master; at the foot of the cross with the Blessed Virgin Mary, he was chosen to be the adopted son of this incomparable Mother and to take Jesus' place with her; he was filled with the treasures of charity, so that to the end of his life his words breathed but this virtue; he was inundated with heavenly light to contemplate the deepest mysteries of the Divinity; like unto the eagle, as the holy Fathers express it, he rose to the greatest heights and fixed his gaze on the very centre of eternal light. It is for this reason that he has for symbol the mysterious

eagle of Ezechiel. Oh! how fully in the beloved disciple we see realized our Saviour's words: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*

III. Practice. How can we obtain, how can we preserve, this enviable purity of heart? We must first endeavor to remove the stains we have had the misfortune to contract, and with vigilant care avoid contracting new ones; in other words, expiate our past faults and avoid committing them in the future.

1st. To expiate the past the fundamental means is contrition; without repentance there is no pardon. Then there are the Sacrament of Penance, mortification, patience, and all good works.

2d. To avoid relapsing into sin, to avoid venial faults, we must practise examination of conscience and arm ourselves against our predominant fault, taking as motto, *Vince te ipsum* —Conquer thyself! Thus we shall enter and advance in the beautiful way of the pure of heart, and shall have part in the blessings promised those who walk therein. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord* (Ps. cxviii. 1).

CHAPTER X.

PRAYER.

Habentes phialas aureas plenas odoramentorum, quæ sunt orationes sanctorum (They had golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints).—APOC. v. 8.

LET us speak to-day of prayer, which the doctors, with reason, call the *great means of salvation.* It is a general opinion among them that one is a Christian in proportion as he practises prayer. Are we faithful in this holy exercise, we shall live well; are we wanting in it, we shall live ill. A man of prayer will be always rich in virtues; if, on the contrary, says St. Bonaventure, I see a man who shows little zeal for prayer, who takes little pains to pray and does it but with nonchalance, I do not require more to know that his soul is void of virtue. Whoever neglects prayer and cares not to converse with God may be regarded as dead and deprived of an interior life: *Is mortuus est et vita carens.*

Such is the language of the Fathers, which is, moreover, conformable to that of Scripture; it shows that prayer is justly called the great

means of salvation. May we appreciate and practise it more and more perfectly! To this end let us consider, I. The excellence of prayer; II. Its necessity; III. Its practice.

I. Excellence of prayer. What is prayer?

1st. It is converse with God. It is sufficient to comprehend this, to see that prayer is the noblest, the most useful exercise which can occupy man on earth. What a favor it is to speak, be it but a moment, with a prince of this world! Happy Samaritan to have conversed with Jesus at the well of Jacob! . . . In this sublime intercourse the creature offers his Creator adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and supplication—in a word, pours out at His feet all the sentiments of his heart. Now, nothing is more pleasing to God than this humble and confident outpouring of a heart which recognizes Him as the Sovereign Good.

2d. Prayer is an incense which rises as an odor of sweetness to the throne of God. Thyme and the perfumes which the priests of the Old Law burned in the Temple of Jerusalem, the incense which burns in the churches of the new Law, are but an image of prayer. *Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight*, says the prophet (Ps. cxl. 2). *I saw*, says St. John in the Apocalypse, *about the throne four-and-twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold, . . . and in*

their hands harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints (Apoc. iv. 4; v. 8). Have we not reason to say that an humble prayer offered to God is worth more than the most eloquent words, the greatest orations, winning the applause of multitudes?

3d. Prayer is the root of the Christian life. How does a tree in the bosom of the earth draw the vivifying sap which causes it to grow and produce fruit? Is it not through its root, without which it would be sterile and perish? The just man is this heavenly tree planted by the hand of God to produce fruits of virtue. *He shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters*, says the prophet; *neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit.* This tree thrives so admirably because it plunges its roots into the waters of grace—that is, is given to prayer, and *on His law meditates day and night* (Ps. i.)

4th. Prayer is the key of heavenly treasures. Giving it this name, St. Augustine makes us understand all the value and excellence of prayer. Whoever possesses this key is rich in the riches of God, powerful in the power of God. Witness Abraham praying for the guilty Sodom, Moses praying for the Israelites in their struggle against the Amalecites, the early faithful praying for St. Peter in chains. . . . Whoever does not possess a spirit of prayer shall be always poor, for the treasures of heaven shall

be closed to him. But it depends upon ourselves to possess this key; we have but to practise our Saviour's words: *Ask, and you shall receive.*

II. Necessity of prayer. Prayer being so precious, it should be practised with earnestness and gratitude; yet such is the indifference and torpor of men that they practise it but little frequently, and sometimes totally neglect it. To avoid falling into this fatal negligence let us stimulate our fervor by considering the necessity of prayer.

1st. Prayer is of obligation, of precept. *We ought always to pray*, says our Saviour (Luke xviii. 1). *Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). These reiterated precepts the Saviour confirmed by His example. . . .

2d. Prayer is necessary as a means. God, though fully disposed to grant us His gifts, particularly salvation—the gift *par excellence*—has made them dependent on prayer; He has made it a condition without which He usually does not grant us His favors. The divine mercy is a fountain open to all men; but to drink its salutary waters it is necessary to draw them. *Sir*, said the Samaritan woman to our Saviour, *thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep; whence then, hast thou living water?*—meaning that to draw water an instrument is neces-

sary. The instrument necessary to draw from the source of living water—that is, the source of grace—is prayer. Providence gives man the harvests and other fruits of the earth for his food and maintenance, but He exacts as a condition the labor of the farmer. Without labor there shall be no harvest, and without prayer there shall be no grace; the soul shall perish of inanition.

3d. If a poor man wishes to be relieved from his misery he must ask for help. If he knew a rich benefactor always ready to help him would he not go to him? This poor man is I and each one of you; this rich benefactor is God, from whom we must ask alms. *Dei mendici sumus*—We are God's beggars, says St. Augustine.

Would to God we knew our poverty! We are poor and naked because of our sins; infirm and suffering because of our passions; destitute of all things because of our want of virtue; weak and without energy to fulfil our duties and perform good works. In all things and at all times we need God; we should have recourse to Him in prayer.

Happy for us were we well convinced of our misery! We would hasten to hold out our hand to Him who can relieve us. But too frequently in the midst of our poverty we believe ourselves rich and in need of nothing, while we

want for everything. *Thou knowest not*, says the Holy Spirit, *that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (Apoc. iii. 17). Let us contemplate Jesus Christ and the saints, His true disciples; let us consider their innocence, their patience, their good works; then let us turn our eyes upon ourselves, and we will come forth from our poverty, and we will have recourse through prayer to Him who can enrich us.

4th. Prayer is necessary to all, to sinners and to the just. Without prayer the sinner will not return to God by a sincere conversion, he will not break the chains of his evil habits; without prayer the just man will not advance in virtue, he will not even persevere in good, and will soon yield to the temptations of the enemy. *Watch, and pray*, says the Lord, *that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Whence are so many lamentable falls, so many sudden relapses after sincere confessions, if not from a want of prayer? We must pray particularly in temptation; without prayer a Christian is like a soldier without arms assailed by a thousand enemies—he cannot but yield. *Watch, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

III. Practice. How must we pray? Nothing is easier than prayer, for it is the words of a child to its father, the petition of a beggar

to a rich benefactor. What child knows not how to speak to a father or mother? What beggar knows not how to ask alms? They do not need eloquent discourse, they do not need even words; often a look, a sign, is sufficient. Then go to God like a child to its father, like a beggar to his benefactor, and you will offer a good prayer.

Nevertheless it will be well to know the conditions, the object, and the key of prayer.

1st. The conditions of a good prayer are respect, confidence, attention, and perseverance.

2d. The object of prayer is what we must ask, what we may ask, of God. This object extends to all the blessings we may desire for soul and body, for ourselves and for others.

When there is question of temporal blessings, such as health, fortune, success in business, it is fitting we should ask them on the condition, tacit or expressed, that they be salutary for us; for frequently the trials from which we ask to be delivered are useful or necessary to the salvation of our souls, and the blessings we would enjoy here below would cause us to lose heaven. Man is ignorant of these consequences, but God sees them all; and for this reason we must only ask for temporal favors as far as God sees they will be useful to our soul.

3d. The key of prayer—that is, the condition which opens the heart and causes it to pour it-

self forth in prayer, that which helps us to pray well and with facility—is the remembrance of the presence of God. Before beginning to pray recollect yourself by an act of lively faith, place yourself in the presence of God at the feet of His divine Majesty. If you are penetrated with this presence, as if He were visible to your eyes, you will pray spontaneously, and you will pray with a perfect respect and confidence. Can a child be in the presence of its father without speaking to him? a creature in the presence of his God without adoring Him and praying to Him? Are you quickly carried away by distractions, bring your mind back to the divine presence and resume your prayer with new attention.

Such is the excellence, necessity, and practice of prayer. To learn this heavenly art well we must ask, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who, according to the apostle, *helpeth our infirmity, and Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings* (Rom. viii. 26).

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORD OF GOD AND READING.

Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei (Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God).—MATT. iv. 5.

LIVING beings must have nourishment to preserve life; this is a general law of nature. Souls are subject to this law as well as bodies. The food of the soul is truth, particularly the truth contained in the word of God and pious reading. It is for this reason our Saviour has said: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.*

Let us speak on this interesting subject, first of the word of God, then of pious reading.

I. The word of God. What is the word of God, and how must we hear it?

1st. The word of God of which there is here question is contained in the preaching of the ministers of the Church. This preaching was begun by Jesus Christ: *From that time Jesus began to preach* (Matt. iv. 17). It was the eternal Word, the Word of God, which spoke in

person to the human race. As this preaching was to reach men of all countries and all times, Jesus Christ charged His apostles to promulgate it, repeat it, and preach it to all creatures. The apostles have obeyed; and their successors, equally docile to the divine mandate, continue the ministry of preaching; their word is the word of God in the sense that God sends them to repeat and explain in His name the doctrine which He has given to the world by the mouth of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

2d. The word of God is a seed. A sower went forth to sow his seed, says the Saviour; some of it fell upon good ground and it brought forth fruit an hundred-fold. *This seed*, adds the Saviour, *is the word of God.* Now, when it falls upon a well-prepared heart —that is, upon good ground—it produces abundant and rich fruit. What is this fruit, if not the Christian life in this world and life eternal in the next? . . .

3d. The word of God is bread. *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.* This spiritual food sustains the life, the strength, the vigor of the soul. It is no less necessary than that of the body, and without the word of God a soul becomes weak and falls. *I am smitten as grass,* says the Psalmist, *and my heart is withered, be-*

cause I forgot to eat my bread (Ps. ci. 5). When we neglect to frequent sermons, and we cease to nourish the mind with divine truths, we fall into ignorance, into forgetfulness of duty, into a state of spiritual languor, in which we yield to all temptations.

4th. The word of God is a sword. *The word of God*, says St. Paul, *is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit* (Hebrews iv. 12). It cuts off all vices by making us combat them; it penetrates our thoughts to purify them; it reaches the heart to produce therein repentance for sin and love for God. When the terrible words, death, judgment, hell, eternity, resound in the soul they produce therein a salutary emotion which opens the source of tears.

5th. The word of God is a light. *Thy word*, says the prophet, *is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths* (Ps. cxviii. 105). It is very easy to go astray in the desert of this world, to fall into errors and snares, to be deceived by illusion and untruth, to take for gold what is only dust, and for a solid good what is but empty smoke. How are these clouds, this darkness, dissipated? By the word of God, before which all errors, all impious, heretical, immoral doctrine, vanish like the shadows of night before the splendors of the sun.

6th. The word of God is a fire. *Was not our heart burning within us*, said the disciples one to another at Emmaus, *whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?* (Luke xxiv. 32). The word of God inflames our heart with love for God and for our Lord Jesus Christ by showing us how much He has loved us; it inflames us with love for our neighbor by causing us to see that it is Jesus Christ Himself whom we love in the person of our neighbor; it inflames us with love for heaven and eternal blessings by teaching us the price of these blessings and the ineffable beauty of heaven; it inflames us with devotion and fervor in the service of God by bringing before us the greatness of the Master we serve. Such is the divine fire which the word of God enkindles and maintains in the heart; it is a vivifying fire, opposed to the destroying fire of the passions and vice.

That the divine word may produce these salutary effects in our souls we must hear it with the requisite dispositions: with respect, as if listening to God Himself; with humility, always applying it to ourselves and never to others; with a Christian spirit, seeking edification rather than the gratification of a vain curiosity. Consequently we must accept the word of God from all who preach, whatever the talent with which God has endowed them.

Provided the garden be watered, says St. Francis of Sales, what matters it whether the water reach it through a reservoir of wood, of marble, or of lead?

May we always hear the word with these holy dispositions! Then it will truly be the food of our souls, and a heavenly seed which will flourish there in all virtues and good works.

II. Reading. If bad reading is a pernicious poison, good and pious reading is a salutary food which recreates our souls and fills them with strength and joy.

1st. We understand by good reading that which is neither injurious nor frivolous, but, on the contrary, is beneficial to the reader by enlightening his mind and gently attracting his heart to virtue.

2d. A good book is a veritable friend, a consoler, a guide in the path of life.

3d. It is a friend who is complacent and interesting to a supreme degree; it returns from the most distant countries, it has lived in the most remote ages; we find it whenever we will; we can always question it, it is ever disposed to answer, and it ceases to speak at our desire; it speaks of all that we would know; it tells us the truth without evasion, reproves our vices without ever wounding us; it repeats the same thing for us as often as we wish without complaint or weariness.

Yes, it is a true friend, which the Holy Spirit tells us is greater than all treasures, and I am not astonished at the words of the pious author of the *Imitation*, who declares that, having sought rest everywhere, he found it only in the reading of a good book. "I have sought for rest everywhere," he says, "but I have found it nowhere except in a little corner with a little book"—*In angulo cum libello.*

What good do not pious books effect in souls! St. Ignatius was converted by reading the lives of the saints, and St. Augustine by reading the Epistles of St. Paul. Blessed Berchmans died clasping to his heart the precious book which guided his steps in the path of perfection.

Then let us love the word of God; let us listen to it when preached by God's minister; let us read it in pious books, where it is offered us in every form. Let us shun bad or doubtful books as a most fatal poison; and let us remember that we are the children of her who is called *Seat of Wisdom* because her ears are ever open to the word of God, and she unceasingly meditates upon it in her heart. *Maria autem conservabat omnia verba hæc, conferens in corde suo* (Luke ii. 19).

CHAPTER XII.

CONFESSION AND EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Si nosmetipsos judicaremus, non utique judicaremur (If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged).—1 Cor. xi. 31.

IF the thought of the judgment we shall undergo after death makes us tremble, we should in prudence use every means in our power to mitigate its severity. To this end the apostle indicates a most efficacious means, which is to judge ourselves. *If we would judge ourselves*, he tells us, *we should not be judged.*

But what must we understand by judging ourselves? We judge ourselves, we accuse ourselves, and we condemn ourselves, 1st, in the holy tribunal of penance; 2d, every time we examine our conscience to correct our faults.

Let us speak of this double judgment.

I. Confession. 1st. What is confession, or the Sacrament of Penance? It is one of the sweetest consolations of a Christian. A poor sick man a prey to evils could not but be happy to find a physician who could cure him, or a

salutary fountain the waters of which would restore him to health. This sick man represents the sinner, represents us all; for we are all sinners, and our wounds are our sins. The physician who offers to cure us is the confessor; the salutary fountain open to us is the Sacrament of Penance. Should we not hasten to have recourse to it? Ah! men undertake difficult voyages to be cured of corporal maladies; they go far in search of mineral waters for the chance of an uncertain cure. A divine fountain is offered us for the cure of all the infirmities and all the wounds of our soul, and yet the majority show no anxiety to profit by it.

The Sacrament of Penance is the great axis of the Christian life. He who makes a holy use of confession shall fulfil all his duties, and he who neglects it shall soon neglect everything else. So that we may judge of the fervor of a Christian by his practice in this matter of confession. If he never go to confession, if he confess his sins once a year or more frequently with true piety, I shall know from his practice in this respect the measure of his spiritual strength. Generally speaking, if confession be on sufferance everything is on sufferance; if it be in full vigor everything is in full vigor and progress.

Confession is one of the great resources of

the Christian life. It penetrates the soul with a grace which purifies, strengthens, and confirms it in peace. And observe that these precious effects are more abundant in proportion as the dispositions of the penitent are more perfect. What, then, must be done to dispose ourselves for the Sacrament of Penance?

How must we make our confession? It would be superfluous to here set forth the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance and the actions which are its preparation; but it will not be useless to make known two thoughts which are singularly suited to facilitate the preparation and worthily dispose our heart when we are about to have recourse to this sacrament.

The first thought is: This confession I am about to make may be my last. Certainly a time will come when I shall make my last confession—the confession after which I shall appear before God. If I knew that this was that confession how great would be my fervor! Therefore each time I approach the holy tribunal I shall say to myself: *This may be the last time.*

The second thought is this: In casting myself at the feet of the priest I prostrate myself at the feet of Jesus Christ Himself. In Penance, as in all the other sacraments, there is a double minister—one visible, the other invisible; one secondary, the other primary. The

visible minister is the priest, but he is secondary to Jesus Christ, the principal Minister, who uses the priest, His minister, to remit sin, somewhat as the master of a house would use the key. Thus we may here apply these words of the divine Master: *I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 20); *Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. xi. 28); *It is I, fear not* (Luke xxiv. 36); and these: *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me* (Luke x. 16). We see how efficacious are these thoughts of faith to encourage and animate the Christian penitent, and inspire him with the holiest dispositions.

If, in fact, it is to Jesus Christ I am about to present myself, if it is at the feet of the best of fathers that I am about to make the avowal of my sins, I will have no difficulty in being penetrated with the repentance of a prodigal child; since in listening to the confessor I am listening to Jesus Christ, I will have no difficulty in following his direction and giving him absolute obedience.

Such is the salutary effect produced in the soul of the penitent by the double thought of death and of Jesus Christ present in the person of His minister. Therefore I will always begin my preparation for the Sacrament of Penance by saying to myself: This confession may be

my last, and it is less to the priest than to Jesus Christ that I am to confess my sins. Then my heart shall easily be filled with the dispositions requisite to reap in all its fulness the fruit of the sacrament.

II. Examination of conscience. We speak here, not of that examination which must be made before confession, and which is called sacramental examen because it serves as preparation for the sacrament, but of daily examination of conscience for the purpose of correcting one's faults, and which is called an ascetic or devotional examen. It is well to understand its importance and know its practice. Importance: Examination of conscience is one of the most efficacious means to correct one's faults and advance in virtue; thus it has been recommended and practised by all the masters of the spiritual life—St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Antony, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Ignatius.

This exercise is to the human heart what weeding is to a garden. The gardener must continually watch his garden to remove the weeds which are always springing up. In like manner vices and faults are continually springing up in our hearts, and we must labor unceasingly to exterminate them by means of examination of conscience.

This examen is to the Christian what the

daily reckoning is to the merchant. If the latter wishes to succeed in his business he must be careful to make up his accounts each evening; in like manner the Christian, to succeed in the affair of his salvation, must exact of himself a daily account of his gains and losses by means of examination of conscience. Without this exercise he will soon fall into negligence and tepidity; by faithfully practising it he will sustain his fervor and will make continual progress.

The exercise of examination of conscience is the true means of observing that vigilance so recommended by the Saviour: *Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation.* We must watch over our thoughts, our words, and our actions, not only to avoid sin but also to discover whether we have sinned during the day, and to correct and repent of any faults into which we have fallen. Who does not see that the examen of which we speak is no other than the practice of this vigilance, since it consists in searching our thoughts, our words, our actions, to discover any fault we have committed, to repent of it, with a firm purpose to watch over ourselves better in the future?

Practice: How are we to practise examination of conscience? Determine a certain time which you will give to it each day: for example, a quarter of an hour before retiring.

At the time fixed for it place yourself on your knees, and, after thanking God and imploring the light of the Holy Spirit, make a general and particular examen, then excite your heart to make an act of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment for the future.

We have just used the terms general and particular examen. By *general* examen we understand a review of all that we have done in thought, word, and deed since our last examen; we understand by *particular* examen that which relates to the predominant fault we wish to extirpate, or the virtue we more specially wish to acquire. After having reviewed all the actions of the day we make our particular examen. What have I done for my particular examen? How many times have I fallen into the fault or practised the virtue which I have chosen as the subject of my particular examen? It is useful to mark in a little book the number of these faults and acts of virtue.

Particular examen, provided it be practised with constancy, is always victoriously efficacious. Your faults, said Fr. Maître Avila, will not hold out long if you persevere in the practice of examen. Such are examination of conscience and sacramental confession. Here, then, as we said in the beginning, are two ways of judging ourselves, of condemning ourselves, in order to make us better and purify us

before the great day when God shall judge us. We may here apply the words of the apostle: if we judge ourselves by a holy use of confession and examination of conscience, we shall not be judged by God and we shall find mercy before His tribunal.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOLY COMMUNION.

Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo (He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him).—JOHN vi. 57.

IE most sublime, or rather the most divine, act a Christian can accomplish on earth is Holy Communion, or the reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ at the table of the Eucharist. The Saviour in His ineffable love invites thither all the faithful, rich and poor; and we respond to His most ardent desires when we frequently approach His Holy Table with the requisite dispositions. But, alas! how many Christians withdraw from it. And those who do draw near, do they always come with the fervor and piety which these mysteries require? Ah! if all hearts do not sigh after the happiness of Communion, if too frequently we communicate without the most intimate devotion, it is because we do not sufficiently understand what Holy Communion is.

Let us endeavor to comprehend more and

more the excellence and fruits of this mystery, as well as the manner of worthily participating in it.

I. Excellence. What is Communion? It is the divine banquet, the visit of Jesus Christ, the ineffable union of the Incarnate Word with the Christian soul.

1st. The banquet of which we speak is indicated by this passage of the Gospel: *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many* (Luke xiv. 16). This man, this father of a family, is no other than the Man-God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is at the same time our King and our Father. He prepared this great banquet the eve of His Passion, at the Last Supper, when, instituting the divine Eucharist, He distributed it to His disciples, saying: *Take ye and eat. . . . Drink ye all of this. . . . Do this for a commemoration of me.* From that day the Eucharistic table has been established in every country of the world; wherever there are Christians, there is a Holy Table at which they assemble, as the children of one family at the table of their Father. This mysterious Table remains prepared through all centuries; the faithful and saints of all ages successively frequent it. Contemplating it, we can say: Behold the Holy Table at which were nourished the apostles and the first disciples of our Saviour, and after them the Gregories, the Leos,

the Basils, the Augustines, the Ambroses, and all our Fathers in the faith ; to which will come future generations until the consummation of ages.

The guests invited are all the faithful. *Come to me*, says our Saviour, *all you that labor and are burdened.* He invites all, rich and poor, because He is the Father of all, and a father nourishes all his children. He invites all, the just and sinners—yes, the sinners are also called, not that in a state of mortal sin they can eat the bread of life, but they are called to make themselves worthy to partake of it by being purified from their sins. What goodness on the part of the Lord our God to thus invite to His table the poorest and humblest of His servants!

And what is the food served at this banquet? It is the divine Body of Jesus Christ, His adorable flesh and precious Blood. If living beings are universally subject to the law of nutrition, if nature imposes upon all the necessity of food, it has also prepared nourishment suited to each one. Parents are careful to procure it for their children in proportion to their age and condition The food of the poor is not that of the rich, and the children of the king are royally nourished. What, then, shall be the food of the children of God? Should it not be divine? Should it not be bread from heaven, the bread of the angels, the true bread of the children of

God—*vere panis filiorum?* Behold how Communion is a divine banquet. It is also the visit of Jesus Christ.

Holy Communion is the visit of Jesus Christ to the faithful soul. What condescension on His part! And what happiness for us to receive the visit of the King of kings! It is related that a king deigned one day to enter a poor cottage and seat himself in the midst of his humblest subjects; and great was the happiness of the poor people. But is not Jesus Christ more than a king? During His mortal life He was pleased to enter the house of a centurion to heal his servant; He deigned to lodge with Zachary, filling his heart with joy and sanctifying him and all his family. . . . Let us not envy the centurion or Zachary the favors they received, for a similar, even greater, favor is granted us. . . .

Ah! if the visit of a physician consoles the sick, if the visit of the rich rejoices the poor, if the visit of Mary filled the house of Elizabeth with grace, what will not the visit of Jesus Christ effect in the soul which receives Him in the Holy Eucharist?

Holy Communion is the union of Jesus Christ with the Christian soul. Food which is assimilated with our substance is a figure of the union which is established between Jesus Christ and the communicant.

How shall we express this ineffable union? Must we compare it to the embrace of a child and its mother? to the embrace of the father falling on the neck of his prodigal son? to that of Jesus Himself embracing little children? Yes, it is an embrace, but more than an embrace: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him.* Ah! it is the union of the branch and the vine; the branch is in the vine, being there implanted, and the vine is in the branch through its vivifying influence. In like manner and more intimately does Jesus Christ unite Himself with the soul in Holy Communion to fill it with His life and fruitfulness.

All this gives us some idea of the inexpressible excellence of Holy Communion. Let us see what are its fruits.

II. Fruits. The fruits of Holy Communion may be reduced to the three following: an increase of the spiritual life, growth in virtues, the transformation of the Christian into Christ. 1st. The life of sanctifying grace which the communicant brings from the Holy Table is susceptible of increase, and its vigor, when weakened, may be restored, just as corporal vigor is restored by the virtue of ordinary bread. Look at a traveller exhausted by fatigue and hunger; as soon as he receives nourishment he revives, his strength is renewed.

Jonathan, pressed by hunger, dipped the end of the rod he held in his hand in a honeycomb, and, putting it in his mouth, his eyes were enlightened—*illuminati sunt oculi ejus* (1 Kings xiv. 27); thus the dying flame of a lamp revives when fed with oil. Elias the prophet, flying from before the face of Jezabel, was extended upon the ground with weariness and fatigue when an angel brought him bread to nourish him. And he arose, says the Scripture, and walked in the strength of that food to the mount of God, Horeb. These are so many figures of that increase of life, of that restoration of spiritual strength, effected in the soul by the food of the Holy Eucharist.

While strengthening the life of grace in us, Holy Communion gives us also a pledge of future glory and a glorious resurrection.

2d. Growth in virtue. Holy Communion is to the soul what an abundant dew is to a garden: it causes the flowers of all virtues to spring therein. But there are two to which it gives a special growth—charity and chastity.

It is not without reason that the Holy Eucharist has been called the sacrament of love and charity; for the Saviour has therein shown us the excess of His love by giving Himself to us as the food of our souls. He is here all love, wholly inflamed with charity; and, uniting Himself with us, He necessarily communicates

to us a portion of His divine ardor to love God with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. If St. Lawrence laughed in the midst of the flames which consumed his flesh it was because he was filled with the victorious fire of divine love, the fruit of Holy Communion, of which he was the dispenser.

Holy Communion communicates to souls the gift of chastity. Holy Scripture calls it bread of angels, wheat of the elect, wine which maketh virgins. And could the wholly virginal flesh of Jesus Christ be united to our flesh without communicating to it the germ of virginity? God deigned one day to show this admirable effect of the Eucharist to one of His servants, who saw a ladder of gold resting on the Eucharistic Table and reaching to heaven; beside the golden ladder was a lily of dazzling whiteness, the roots of which were buried in the bread of the elect and in the chalice which maketh virgins.

3d. The third fruit of Holy Communion is the transformation of the Christian into Jesus Christ. The bread which you eat, says St. Augustine, is changed into your substance; but the spiritual bread, which is no other than Jesus Christ, changes you into Him. As iron plunged into a furnace partakes of the nature of fire, becoming ardent and wholly inflamed with heat, so our soul, plunged into Jesus Christ by means of Holy

Communion, and penetrated with His Spirit, is in a measure transformed into Him: the thoughts of Jesus Christ become our thoughts, His sentiments become our sentiments, His words our words, His actions our actions, and we may say with St. Paul: *I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20). Behold the fruits of Holy Communion. Now, the more devoutly we receive this divine food the more fully we reap these blessed fruits.

III. Practice. The practice or holy use of Communion according to the intentions of the divine Master means a frequent use preceded by preparation and followed by thanksgiving.

1st. A frequent use. It is spiritual food which we receive in Holy Communion, and, like corporal food, it will not suffice to take it once—we must frequently nourish our soul with it. The desire of Jesus Christ, manifested by the organ of His Church, is that the faithful frequently approach the Holy Table—that is, several times a year, once a month, every week, or oftener still, according as each one finds best and his confessor approves.

2d. Preparation. Remote preparation consists in purifying one's heart from all mortal sin, and even from venial sin as much as possible. The proximate preparation is made in church by exciting one's self to fervor with the acts of faith, contrition, confidence, and love—acts

which can be made in the heart or from a book.

3d. Thanksgiving. When we receive Holy Communion we must remain at least a quarter of an hour in church to speak to the divine Host, whom we have the happiness of possessing, and to pour forth our prayers at His feet. What have we not to ask Him for ourselves and for others! . . .

This is what is called thanksgiving after Holy Communion. But gratitude for such a benefit must extend still further. The Christian who has drawn near to the Holy Table can never forget the ineffable favor he has received from Jesus Christ, nor cease to remember that he has been wholly sanctified, body and soul, by the flesh and blood of the Man-God. This remembrance will help to preserve from all stain and all profanation his thoughts, his affections, his eyes, his tongue, all his senses, his body, and his soul, to which Jesus Christ has deigned to unite Himself in so intimate a manner.

Behold the treasure we possess in Holy Communion. Let us ask God, through the intercession of Mary, the grace to constantly draw from it the life, the strength, the consolation of our souls.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANNUAL RETREAT.

Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus (I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart).—OSEE ii. 14.

AMONG the great means of living a Christian life there is one of which we have not yet spoken, and which is no less efficacious: I mean an annual retreat. This will appear neither a strange nor an impracticable thing to any one when he shall have understood the explanation we are about to give.

A spiritual retreat is nothing but the period of a few days consecrated solely to the affair of our salvation and the great interests of our soul. In colleges and other educational houses there is an annual retreat; many sodalities also have their retreat every year; even parishes from time to time have a retreat, which then takes the name of mission. It is one of the greatest graces granted the faithful; and we may say that those who profit by it cannot fail to be fervent Christians.

To appreciate this grace, and dispose our-

selves to make a worthy use of this great means of salvation, let us consider, I. The advantages of a retreat; II. The manner of following with profit the pious exercises.

I. Advantages of a retreat. The advantages and fruits of a retreat are a clear view of truth, a renewal of the spirit, peace of conscience, a pledge of happiness, a holy preparation for death.

1st. A clear view of truth. Man needs to reflect on the affairs of his soul and on his eternal destiny. What is there more important? If he attaches so much value to his body, which is mortal, and to his temporal fortune, which death will take from him, should he not do infinitely more in the case of his soul, which is immortal, and his salvation, which must be his fortune in eternity? Now, in the midst of the turmoil of affairs and daily dissipations men think only of the objects which strike the senses; they forget completely the things of the spirit and fall into deplorable neglect of their salvation. Their soul, according to the expression of the prophet, is like a land ravaged by the enemy: *All the land is made desolate because there is none that considereth in the heart* (Jer. xii. 11). What would you say of a traveller who, going through an unknown country, would choose the most agreeable path without knowing whither it would bring him? Instead of going blindly on his

way must he not know the country, should he not ascend the nearest height and from its summit survey the different routes which lead, some to an abyss, and others to his country? This traveller is man journeying through the desert of this world to reach his eternal destiny. Can he proceed blindly and at hazard? Should he not pause to consider his way amidst the thousand paths of this life? It is necessary, then, that he ascend the mountain—that is, draw near to God by reflection and solitude; there he will see where he is, he will hear the voice of truth, which is that of God, speaking to his heart: *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.*

O holy cells of the anchorites, holy caves of the Thebaid, of Tabena, of Nitria; obscure grotto of Mount Pilgrim, which concealed an illustrious princess; wild grotto of Manresa, which sheltered a valiant captain, with what pure light I behold ye flooded! But without going to the forest of the Thebaid we find this luminous solitude in the exercises of a retreat.

II. A renewal of spirit. All, even the most fervent, among us need to renew our spirit, according to the words of the apostle: *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph. iv. 23)—that is, reanimate, renew your fervor, revive your spiritual forces, repair your losses in virtue.

Alas! virtue also is subject to decadence, like

all human things; and if it is necessary at the end of a certain time to restore an edifice, to refit a ship, to repair machinery, to renew provisions, it is no less necessary to renew from time to time the virtues, the operations, and all the resources of our souls. Without this precaution we cannot avoid falling into decadence, into the sleep of tepidity, and perhaps even that of death.

III. Peace of conscience. There is no happiness possible without peace of conscience. Interior trouble has two degrees, that of mortal sin and that of tepidity. . . . Whatever our state, we should say: I wish to tranquillize my conscience once for all, and bind myself to the divine law like a good Christian. I wish that my conscience should render me the sweet testimony that I am reconciled to God and heartily vowed to His service. Then I shall rest in peace without fearing the surprise of death.

IV. A pledge of happiness. Would you be happy? Ah! who would not? Happiness is the natural and invincible aspiration of every human being. Then if you would be happy there is no better way than to make a good retreat. For happiness does not consist in riches or exterior enjoyments, but in fear of the Lord, as the words of the Holy Spirit repeatedly tell us: *Blessed is the man that feareth*

the Lord (Ps. cxi. 1). Now, a retreat establishes the soul in this blessed fear like an edifice upon its foundations. Then would you be happy—you particularly, young men and women? Would you have a pledge of an honorable and happy career? Make a good retreat and you will lay the foundation of a fine future. . . .

V. Preparation for death. In obedience to the advice of the divine Master we must prepare ourselves for death, that we may be always ready; it behooves us, then, to make a preparation, at least from time to time. To this end there is no time better fitted than that of a retreat. Then it is easy to regulate one's accounts with God; while under other circumstances, particularly at a time of sickness, it is difficult, and frequently impossible. Therefore ought we not profit by a retreat for an action so important? We should, particularly as every retreat may be for those who begin it the last of their life. Each one should say to himself at the beginning: This retreat may be my last: I desire to make it in a spirit of preparation for death.

In this way the retreat will be for all a true preparation for death, proximate for some, remote for others.

Such are the principal advantages of a spiritual retreat; they show us that it is an excep-

tional, inestimable grace which we cannot sufficiently desire.

Practice. To fully reap the fruits of a retreat we should follow the exercises with assiduity, earnestness, and prayer.

Assiduity sometimes exacts sacrifices; there are inconveniences and obstacles to overcome; we must foresee them, forestall them, or overcome them with a generous heart, remembering it is for God and our soul. Would we not do it for corporal interests? . . .

Earnestness consists in giving ourselves exclusively to the exercises, setting aside everything which is not absolutely necessary, listening attentively to the sermons, reflecting upon them as they specially apply to our needs, that we may be penetrated with them, and noting points which particularly impress us, that we may preserve them.

Prayer. We must pray a great deal to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the Blessed Virgin, say the rosary, assist at Mass, make the road of the cross. It is well also, at times, to examine our conscience in preparation for confession.

Thus we will reap the fruits of a retreat in all their fulness, and find therein a pledge of salvation and a source of all blessings.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PASSIONS—NECESSITY OF CONQUERING THEM.

Spiritu ambulate, et desideria carnis non perficietis (Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh).—GALAT. v. 16.

AMONG the numerous shoals which virtue encounters there are none more dangerous than unconquered passions. The sad shipwrecks which daily precipitate souls into sin and hell are commonly caused by a fatal passion which has become mistress of the heart.

The passions or disorderly desires of the flesh and the senses unceasingly strive to possess the heart of man; and once they attain it they lead it into sin, and, through sin, to eternal perdition.

It is an intestine war, an interior rebellion in man; it is the revolt of the flesh against the spirit, the slave against the master—a revolt which began on the day of our first parents' sin.

Before sin man possessed a tranquil empire over his heart. Not that he was without pas-

sions, but his passions were not rebellious; they were submissive to reason, as reason itself was to God. Such was the effect of the order established by the Creator. The empire of the human heart belongs to reason; it should reign as king and command the flesh, the senses, and all the passions. The senses and the passions should obey reason, as reason, in its turn, should obey God. This beautiful order observed, all is harmony and peace; this order disturbed, all is confusion, war, and disorder. Behold what followed the disobedience of our first parents: the passions revolted against reason; pride, avarice, sensuality, all bad instincts rose to invade the human heart and reduce it to slavery. This rebellion of the passions is the inheritance of all the descendants of Adam.

In this intestine war men are divided into two great classes: one class resist, the other yield; one conquer their passions, the other bend beneath their yoke.

Facing the same alternative, in the midst of the same struggle, what, brethren, shall we do? Shall we be conquerors or conquered? masters or slaves of our passions? We must decide promptly. Before enemies so vigilant and active there is no hesitating, under pain of being surprised by them and subjected to their yoke.

In order to act with wisdom and prudence

in this grave situation let us examine two questions: 1st. Why must we conquer our passions? 2d. What are the proper means of conquering them?

Why must we conquer our passions?

1st. Because we are men and not vile animals. The latter, deprived of reason, obey the grosser instincts of their senses, the movements of which are but passions; these are the natural guides of animals. Not so with man. Created to the image of God, he has received for his guidance the light of reason, sublime participation of the divine intelligence. It is this, and not instinct, blind passion, which must direct his steps here below.

For what further reason should man conquer his passions? Because unconquered passions destroy his happiness; they reduce him to slavery, they debase him, they bring him into the greatest misery in this life and the next.

Do not the passions reduce man to slavery? Do they not take away his liberty by subjecting him to their caprices and tyranny? Once ambition, cowardly human respect, cupidity, sensuality take possession of a heart, they command as masters and man must obey. Passion cries, Pleasures! I must have pleasures. But the pleasures you ask, man pleads, my reason, my conscience, my God forbid. No matter, replies the tyrant; neither reason, conscience, nor God

rules here. I command. . . . And man, become a slave, submits to the exactions of his tyrant. More pleasures, repeats Passion—pleasures, amusements, books, conversations, gay society. But these books, these conversations, this society, my conscience, my reason, my God forbid me them. No matter, replies the tyrant; I exact them: I am master . . . . And man, reduced to a slave, bends under the yoke of his tyrant. This is not all; Passion is not satisfied; its insatiable avidity claims new food. But I cannot meet these expenses. I have no more resources, my fortune is exhausted, my reputation is gone, even my health is compromised; these excesses have engendered consumption and death in my breast. No matter, replies the tyrant; pleasures, pleasures at any price—at the price of thy fortune, thy honor, even thy life. . . . And man, degraded, bends under this yoke and wears these shameful chains to the tomb.

Behold the sad slavery of those who do not conquer their passions! Were they clothed in purple and masters of the world, if they are not masters of their hearts they drag under a brilliant exterior the chains of the hardest servitude.

I go further: they are more degraded than slaves. A slave is always a man, but those who obey their passions descend to the rank of the vilest animals.

What is it distinguishes man from unreasoning animals? It is not only that animals walk bending towards the earth, while man walks erect, his brow nobly raised towards heaven; no, that is only an exterior difference. The true difference is that animals are made for the earth and for the coarse food which corresponds to the appetites of their senses, while man, made for God and heavenly beatitude, must aspire to this sublime destiny by practising good according to the light of reason and faith. If he close his eyes to this double light, if to obey his appetites and his senses he abandon the path of virtue, he abdicates his dignity of child of God; and though he still walk erect, his brow raised toward heaven, he no less follows the low herd of beings who bend toward the earth. *Man when he was in honor did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them* (Ps. xlviii. 21).

This is not all. Not only do the passions reduce men to the level of beasts, but they make them a thousand times more miserable. An animal finds his happiness in gratifying the appetites of his senses, because he is made to enjoy this sort of pleasures. Man, on the contrary, who, instead of repressing his sensual instincts, seeks to satisfy them, reaps only disappointment, misery, and ruin.

Consider the wretched beings in this world,

look at the bottom of their misery, and you will discover a passion.

There are hearts racked by remorse; they have no rest day or night. Is it not a passion which has plunged them into sin the principle of their remorse?

There are hearts corroded by hatred; enmity and vengeance poison their days. Is not their tormentor a passion?

There are unhappy hearts bound by matrimonial ties, existences vowed to a life of sorrow. Is it not a passion which has thrust them into this abyss?

There are unhappy families where there is neither respect, nor love, nor union. What is the cause? Is it not a passion? . . .

There are families ruined, groaning in misery. What is frequently the cause? Ambition, luxury, or some other passion.

Happy for the victims of passion if their woes were confined to this life! But, alas! most frequently from one abyss they fall into another—from temporal misery into eternal.

What, in fact, is the cause of all the sin which abounds in the world—injustice, impiety, infamy? What is the source of this impure torrent? Is it not a guilty passion? What is it precipitates so many unfortunate beings into hell? Is it not always a passion? What causes souls to abandon the path of virtue? Is it not

usually the same cause? How many young persons begin by walking in the path of innocence, and, reaching a certain age, throw off the yoke of Christ and cast themselves into the path of perdition! It is a passion which carries them away—an unconquered passion. Solomon, the wisest of men, blinded by a guilty passion, left the path of virtue and fell into the greatest disorders. What lost Judas? A passion—the passion of avarice. What in our own day is the ruin of thousands of souls? Always passion. Ah! if hell were open before us, and we were permitted to ask the unhappy reprobates the cause of their perdition, all, or nearly all, would answer: That which caused my ruin, my eternal ruin, was a passion; with me it was pride, with me it was hatred, with me it was cupidity, with me it was indolence which prevented me from fulfilling my Christian duties, with me it was human respect, with me it was lust—yes, an unconquered passion was the cause of our ruin.

Ah! my brethren, no one among us, I hope, through the mercy of God and the intercession of His Blessed Mother, will be among the reprobates; but if, however, any of us should have the misfortune to wander from the right path and end in perdition, that which shall precipitate him into the abyss will be a passion which has become mistress of his heart.

Such are the fatal effects of passions when

not controlled by the restraints of reason. Cost what it may, must we not avoid these misfortunes? Let us devote ourselves, then, with courage to repressing our disorderly appetites; let our inviolable rule be, Not what is pleasant, but what is right; not what my passion demands, but what my conscience and my duty commands.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PASSIONS—HAPPINESS OF THE MAN WHO IS MASTER OF THEM.

Melior est patiens viro forti ; et qui dominatur animo suo, expugnatore urbium (The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities).—PROV. xvi. 32.

IF he is considered a great king who delivers his people from the yoke of an usurper, if he is happy to have chained the tyrant and restored peace to his country, greater and happier is the Christian who conquers the tyrants of his heart and chains his passions.

He who conquers himself, says a venerable author, *possesses the greatest peace ; he shall be master of the world, the friend of Jesus Christ, and inheritor of heaven.* This sentence of the *Imitation of Christ* retracing the noble image of man, master of his passions, indicates the principal traits of his happiness. Let us make them evident by saying that he who conquers himself will enjoy great peace, will advance in the path of virtue, will be powerful in works, will merit the love of God and men.

1st. Peace. Men are troubled and shaken not only by remorse of conscience but also by the passions and desires of their hearts. Their immoderate desires torment them like a cruel thirst, and it has been truly said that man's desires are his executioners. The passions disturb and shake the soul to its depth; like the furious winds of the sea, they excite storms and tempests in the heart. Chain these winds, repress these desires, and the soul becomes calm and serene.

This serenity of the soul is singularly favorable to the operations of the mind and heart. Those who enjoy it will apply themselves with as much facility as success to the study of the sciences, and particularly to the noble and holy exercise of prayer. Their mind, free from agitation, resembles a tranquil stream; it is a mirror in which is reflected the radiant image of the Sun of Justice.

It is important, however, to remark well that if the calm of the passions procures the soul a sweet peace it does not dispense it from vigilance. This peace should be an armed peace, for the passions are not dead but dormant, chained. They may awaken, and, if we rest in an imprudent confidence, revolt and break their chains. To prevent this misfortune we must persevere in vigilance and prayer: *Watch ye, and pray*, says the Saviour, *that ye enter not into temp-*

tation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. xxvi. 41).

2d. Advancement in virtue. Our evil inclinations are obstacles to virtue, but obstacles which, when conquered, change into means. The most violent passions once bridled become docile steeds, powerful auxiliaries for sanctity.

Consider the saints—those model men who shine like lights in the world; examine their lives, and you will see that all triumphed over their perverse inclinations; their conquered passions became so many wings which raised them so high. How, in fact, did they acquire this admirable humility, gentleness, patience, charity? Was it not by combating, by repressing the opposite vices and passions? Yes, the humility which you admire in the saints is conquered pride; gentleness is conquered anger; patience, conquered sensuality; charity, conquered selfishness. All the saints became true disciples of Jesus Christ for having thrown off the old man, as the apostle says—that is, for having subjected their passions to the yoke of reason and the divine will.

3d. Powerful in works. The man who conquers himself will do great things for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. In the combat with his rebellious passions he has exercised and strengthened his will; he has so tempered his soul that it resists all obstacles. It is

such a picture which prompted a pagan to say: *The man who knows how to conquer his heart, control the transports of his anger, raise a fallen enemy and load him with benefits—the man who can do these things is not only equal to the greatest men but superior to humanity.** Moreover, God, to whom he submits all the desires of his soul, will bless his works with a benediction which is a pledge of all success.

Hence those grand works which we admire in a Vincent of Paul, a Francis of Sales, an Ignatius, a Francis Xavier, without mentioning a multitude of other generous souls whom we behold before us.

4th. He shall merit the love of God and men. Man, master of his passions, becomes gentle, moderate, charitable. Is more needed to make us loved by God and men? The passionate man is not loved; he is feared, detested, for he creates disorder everywhere. Like an animal which uproots a garden to find a few herbs which it seeks, he overturns everything to satisfy a caprice. *Be not as a lion in thy house*, says the Scripture, *terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee* (Ecclus. iv. 35). As passion will not reason and is deaf to remonstrance, the man who allows it to govern him offends everybody, wounds his best friends.

* Cicero, *Pro Marcello.*

If he enters society quarrels and disturbances enter with him.

Wherever, on the contrary, the calm and self-contained man presents himself we behold peace and tranquillity established, because moderation induces kindliness, gentleness takes possession of hearts. *Blessed are the meek*, says our Saviour, *for they shall possess the land:* they shall possess the land, because they possess all hearts. Holy Scripture calls Moses the meekest of men, and adds that *he was beloved of God and men* (Ecclus. xlv. 1). St. Francis of Sales was the most amiable man of his time, because he was the most calm and the most gentle. St. Francis Xavier, by force of mortifying his passions, acquired such a perfect control over himself, and such winning cordiality and sweetness of manner, that a Japanese king said he wished to be a Christian, that he might have the happiness of enjoying in paradise the society of a man so gentle.

Add to so many advantages the enjoyment of true liberty. He who frees himself from the yoke of his passions to obey the Spirit of Jesus Christ enjoys the liberty of the children of God, for the apostle tells us: *Whosover are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. viii. 14). O incomparable dignity and happiness of men transformed into the children of God! Oh! sweet is their liberty—liberty of a heart freed from the passions; true liberty,

which no power can chain and which is preserved even in the midst of chains; liberty which depends upon nothing in this world save God; which fears nothing in this world save God and offence against God; liberty full of peace and grandeur, a sort of royalty of grace, admirable anticipation of the royalty of glory which must follow it in the life to come.

Behold the happy effects of conquered passions: peace, great works, the love of God and men, true liberty in this life, a pledge of eternal happiness in the next. Is not such happiness, my brethren, worthy of our ambition? Does it not merit to be purchased with generous efforts? Shall we not willingly sustain the noble struggle against our passions to reap such a precious victory?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PASSIONS—MEANS OF CONQUERING THEM.

Spiritu ambulate, et desideria carnis non perficietis (Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh).—GALAT. v. 16.

HOWEVER little we reflect upon what passes in the world, we see clearly that the unhappiness of men, of families, and of states arises from unconquered passions; and man, to secure his happiness, must bridle his passions, mortify them according to the teaching of the Gospel.

But is not this very difficult? Is it possible for me to succeed in mastering my rebellious nature? I answer that it is not only possible for you, but that you are sure to succeed if you employ the proper means. I acknowledge it requires courage, but the difficulties diminish once we employ the proper means.

I. The first means of overcoming one's passions is to change their object. A skilful pilot makes use of every wind to speed him on his course, because he knows how to skilfully set his sail. Do the same. Instead of a temporal

object present your passions an eternal object. You love pleasures; this passion, fed with earthly and culpable pleasures, would be your ruin; but present it the pure pleasures of piety, that hidden manna which contains all sweetness; seek the torrents of delight which God promises you in heaven; fix your eyes upon the ineffable joys of the elect, attach your heart to them, and soon the frivolous joys of earth will become to you insipid and wearisome.

You love beauty? Alas! earthly beauty is an ephemeral flower destined to fall into dust at the breath of death. Fix your eyes upon the beauties of the house of God; upon the beauty of Jesus Christ, the most beautiful of the sons of men; upon the beauty of a soul in the state of grace—a beauty which enraptures the angels, which enraptures the heart of God Himself. Open your heart to these beauties, truly worthy of your love and your desires—beauties which neither time nor death can mar.

You love riches? Then amass riches and treasures, but in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

You love glory? An immortal glory is offered you; give free scope to your ambition, aspire to the highest rank in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of the King of kings.

Behold objects worthy of your desires and

your passions! Behold the true riches which you must covet and pursue! Then raise your eyes and heart higher than these worldly joys. *O ye sons of men*, says the prophet, *how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?* (Ps. iv. 3).

It was by changing the object of their affections that the saints so quickly mastered their hearts. St. Francis Xavier was consumed with ambition; he pined for glory and renown. A ray of light from on high showed him that earthly glory passes like a shadow; that if he desired true glory he must give himself to God and consecrate his talents to the King of kings. This light struck his mind, and, docile to the movement of grace, he consecrated himself from that moment to the glory of God and the salvation of souls with the same passion that he had formerly sought earthly renown. And thanks to this ardor, which was that of the purest zeal, he won for himself a glory which shall never end.

II. The second means of conquering our passions is to combat them face to face. There are times when one must take his heart in his hands and violently constrain and master it as one would master an unruly steed. There are injuries which gall the heart and make the blood boil in one's veins, there are moments when sorrow and suffering overwhelm the soul, when

pride or wounded self-love rises with what seems an indomitable strength. How, then, is one to maintain himself in humility, in charity, in Christian patience? . . . How is one to conquer these efforts of passion save by a more powerful effort of will, of a will fortified by grace? This strength you will draw from the bosom of God by turning your eyes towards Jesus Christ, your model, and towards His holy image. Our Saviour one day reproached one of His servants that she did not overcome all the movements of her heart. What would you, Lord? she answered; my will is stronger than myself. Place it in the wound of my Heart, and you will there find strength to overcome yourself. She followed the advice of the divine Master, had recourse to His Heart, and triumphed over all her repugnances.

III. A third means is to direct one's efforts against what is called the *predominate* passion. When David had killed Goliath, the dreaded chief of the Philistines, all the army of the enemy scattered. Among our passions there is usually a chief one, which we may call the Goliath of our heart. Sometimes it is anger, sometimes pride, sometimes sensuality. Whatever it may be, we must attack and uproot it first, after which we shall overcome the others without difficulty.

IV. The fourth and last means, that which

sums up all the others, is the constant practice of examination of conscience. St. Ignatius says that this practice faithfully observed is sufficient of itself to free the heart in a few years from the empire of the most tyrannical passions.

Such are the means for conquering the passions. If it costs at times to employ them, does not the victory they win us merit the greatest sacrifices? Ah! does not the conquest of the sweetest liberty, the conquest of a kingdom—the kingdom of heaven—merit the devotion of all our energies and courage?

No, you should say, if others in their cowardice allow themselves to be subjugated by earthly amusements, I will never allow myself to be the slave of my senses. Like the saints, like all noble hearts, I will combat. At the hour of my death I desire to be able to say with the apostle: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. There is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me* (2 Tim. iv.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

Regnum cælorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud (The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away).—MATT. xi. 12.

HESE words reveal spiritual combat—the combat which every Christian must maintain to enter into possession of the heavenly kingdom. Heaven, beautiful heaven, was purchased for us by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and all men are called there, all can enter there; yet all do not enter, for the *kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent*—the courageous souls—*bear it away.* It is a kingdom to be conquered, and it must be conquered at the price of courage and combat. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully* (2 Tim. ii. 5). What, then, is this spiritual combat? What are the enemies we must combat, and how must we bear off the victory?

I. Enemies. The spiritual combat of which we speak consists in triumphing over the enemies of our soul, which are three in number—the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The devil, the spirit of darkness and error, particularly attacks our mind and our faith, which is true light. He seeks to obscure it by leading us to neglect Christian instruction and pious meditations. He goes further: he seeks to corrupt our faith by insinuating fatal errors therein, that he may, if possible, rob us of it entirely. To attain this end he unceasingly invents numberless errors, which he veils under theories of every form; and to spread them he makes use of a double instrument, which, alas! effects his purpose only too well—a railing and impious press, and conversations which are its echo. Behold the first enemy of our soul—the devil!

The second is the world, the devil's great auxiliary. The world makes the most of the weakness of the human heart and endeavors to beguile and intimidate it. It beguiles it with amusements, theatres, dangerous companions, flattery, applause, promises of fortune. And these amusements and promises are so many snares into which fall those who do not hold the eternal salvation of their soul above everything else. It frightens timid souls with the phantom of human respect, threatening them with its raillery and disgrace. It alarms interested souls by showing them the effects of its vengeance in the loss of a position, injured business, etc. Behold the world and its tactics. To

overcome it we must despise its false promises as well as its menaces, brave its persecutions, even the most violent. They can do us no real harm, for our Saviour tells us: *Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell* (Matt. x. 28).

The third enemy is the flesh—that is, ourselves and our disorderly passions. We understand by passions pride, avarice, and the other capital vices of which we bear the germ within us. They are venomous reptiles which breed in the depths of our hearts, and which must be stifled while they are still weak and comparatively harmless. If we allow them to grow they will stifle the life of our souls. They are unruly slaves, and if we yield to their caprices they will turn tyrants and reduce us to a bondage which will lead us to eternal perdition. We must conquer our passions, we must conquer self; we must conquer generously, and early exercise ourselves in this good combat.

But to be victorious how must we combat these enemies? The conditions required are courage and the use of arms.

1st. Without courage there is no victory. He who wishes to conquer must close his heart to all sadness, despondency, or discouragement, and fill it with a noble ardor which is called warlike courage. Courage is in-

flamed at the sight of danger and by the hope of victory.

The danger which threatens us is supreme; our enemies are powerful and bent upon our eternal ruin. But feeble as we are, we can conquer them, because the Almighty offers us His assistance. Ah! if God is with us who shall be against us? *I can do all things*, says the apostle, *in Him who strengtheneth me*. At the same time God offers us only His assistance. He does not dispense us from combating ourselves; He wishes that we should exert all our energies, that we should use the arms he places at our disposition.

2d. The use of arms. Now, what are these arms? First, the sword of prayer, which we must have ever in hand. Then we must cover ourselves with a sacred buckler—the buckler of the sacraments, which we should frequent. Finally, we must wear the helmet of salvation—that is, faith, which we must strengthen and nourish by hearing the word of God and by pious reading.

Such is the spiritual combat which we have to sustain; such are the tactics which will secure us victory. And the more confidence we have in the Queen of Heaven the more easy and the more complete will be this victory. She is the powerful Virgin; she shall overthrow our enemy, and her virginal foot shall crush his head.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TWO STANDARDS.

Videte, ne seducamini (Take heed you be not seduced).—LUKE xxi. 8.

THE Christian life is a combat; but to combat well we must above all follow the good standard and beware of allowing ourselves to be seduced or enrolled under the enemy's standard. *Videte, ne seducamini.*

Christ has raised His standard before the eyes of the universe, and He invites all men to follow it; an immortal crown shall be the price of victory.

In that day, says Isaias, *shall be the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of peoples* (Isaias xi. 10).

But before the royal standard of Christ I see another raised; it is the standard of Satan, the chief of the rebel host.

For nineteen centuries these two standards have floated over the world: on one side is Christ, the true King of mankind, who leads His followers to eternal life; on the other Sa-

tan, the prince of darkness, who leads his victims to ruin and eternal perdition.

Obliged to choose between two chiefs so different, does it not seem as if all men must unhesitatingly range themselves under the banner of Christ and fly with horror from the banner of the tyrant who desires their ruin? Alas! they do not act thus. I see mankind divided into two parties: one rallies round the banner of Christ, the other round that of Satan, and, stranger still, the latter faction is the more numerous.

Whence is this astonishing division? Whence is it that men are so insensate as to wish to follow the tyrant who leads them to perdition? Whence is it particularly that they are so numerous? What is the cause of this folly?

The answer is simple: we allow ourselves to be seduced. Thus our Saviour has warned us, saying: *Take heed you be not seduced.*

That we may not be the victims of a seduction so fatal let us attentively consider and endeavor to thoroughly understand the character of the two standards. Let us consider both as they are presented in our time under their form and contemporaneous colors.

I. The standard of Christ. The standard of Jesus Christ is no other than the cross, the instrument of His death, the sign of salvation, the symbol of faith and Christian virtues.

. . . It is Christ Himself who bears this standard through all ages; He bears it by the hands of His Church; He bears it openly before the universe.

Those who follow it are, first, the pope, the bishops, and all the hierarchy of the Church; then all the zealous and militant laity who associate themselves with the priesthood to fight the good fight; finally, all the faithful sincerely attached to their faith and their religious duties.

Where does it lead its followers? To virtue and true civilization in this world and eternal happiness in the next. This is the end of all the operations of the Church—operations which constitute the tactics of the soldiery of Christ. At the present day, besides preaching, worship, celebration of the divine office in temples, they include education and schools, a good press, the exercise of political rights, and even the vindication of political rights. The particular character of this spiritual strategy is determined by the manœuvres of our enemies; we must baffle these manœuvres and fight the enemy on the ground where he attacks us.

II. Standard of Satan. It is the standard of revolt against God and of seduction to men. It is displayed with a splendor of gold and a thousand colors, parading in dazzling characters the great words: *liberty*, *riches*, *science*, and *grandeur*.

It is borne, not by the horrible Satan or Lucifer —he keeps himself hidden—but by his ministers, his lieutenants, his instruments; such are princes, enemies of the Church, and the chiefs of the Masonic lodges; such are also bad magistrates, bad writers, evil professors for youth.

Soldiers who walk under this banner are generally all men who are not adherents of Christ and who follow the side of evil.

We distinguish among them, first of all, the declared enemies of the Church; then those who join them, who favor their operations or approve of them, whether through weakness, or interest, or indifference; finally, bad Christians who desire to freely satisfy their passions.

Where does Lucifer lead his partisans? To eternal perdition by leading them through love of riches and pleasures to proudly rebel against God. The end of all his strategies and manœuvres is to destroy the faith in the minds of his followers and substitute a spirit of independence, impiety, sensuality, and develop this spirit by means of schools, the press, and popular festivities opposed to religious solemnities. Such are the means he employs.

Behold the two standards which divide mankind into two hostile camps; behold the great struggle, the great duel, of which our globe is the theatre.

Which shall conquer? Shall it be Satan, the genius of evil, or Christ, the King of justice! The victory is assured to Christ, and all those who remain faithful to Him shall triumph with Him on the day of His coming. Then the standard of His cross shall appear glorious above the innumerable army of the just; the standard of Satan shall vanish. This prince of darkness shall be there with all his adherents, like a rebellious chief with his vanquished army, covered with shame and awaiting his punishment. Then shall be verified the words: *I make thy enemies thy footstool* (Ps. cix. 1).

On one side shall be Christ with the triumphant just; on the other the partisans of evil, the followers of Satan, of Antichrist, confounded, and condemned to eternal perdition: *These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into life everlasting* (Matt. xxv. 46).

On which side shall you be, brethren? On which side would you then wish to be? Ah! doubtless you would wish to find yourself with Jesus Christ and the elect at that supreme moment. Then if you would assure yourself this happy fate you must from this moment openly enrol yourself under the standard of Christ; you must now associate yourself with His followers by a Christian life; you must combat in the ranks of the elect, if later you would triumph with the elect.

O holy Virgin, thou who renderest thy servants invincible in combat, obtain for us the grace not to allow ourselves to be overcome by temptation and to never abandon the standard of thy So...

CHAPTER XV

TEMPTATIONS.

Fili, accedens ad servitutem Dei sta in justitia et timore, et præpara animam tuam ad tentationem (Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation).—ECCLUS. ii. 1.

WHOEVER would be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, attain virtue, and merit the promised reward must know, first of all, that he shall have temptations to endure. Temptations are the portion of humanity on earth, as war is the condition of the soldier who finds himself in the enemy's country. The Saviour Himself willed to be tempted to show us that this kind of struggle is inevitable, and to teach us to sustain it victoriously.

In order to faithfully practise these divine teachings let us consider first of all what are the causes of temptation; then why God permits them; and, finally, how we should conquer them.

I. Causes of temptation. It is not God who is the cause of temptation, but the devil, the world, the flesh, and man himself.

It is not God. The apostle St. James expressly tells us *that God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man* (St. James i. 13). It is true that He tempted Abraham, according to the expression of the sacred text, but it was a temptation of trial, not of sin. When in the "Our Father" we say, *lead us not into temptation*, the meaning of the words is not, *do not tempt* us, but *do not let us yield to temptation*, help us to overcome it.

The cause of temptation is, first of all, the devil, who for this reason is called in Scripture the *tempter*. He tempts men either by open force or by deceiving and surprising them, playing sometimes the lion, sometimes the insidious serpent. . . .

The second cause of temptation is the world, which tempts souls by its attractions, its scandals, by human respect, by pleasures, riches, ambition, even by the turmoil of business, which causes souls to forget the great affair of salvation. . . .

The third cause of temptation is the flesh, the concupiscence engendered in human nature by the sin of Adam. The flesh is a source of temptation, a centre of sin—*fomes peccati.*

Finally, the fourth cause of temptation is man himself, who provokes it by idleness, by the liberty which he grants to his senses, by intemperance, by his rashness in exposing him-

self to danger, by humoring the desires and appetites of his sensuality. . . .

Why does God permit temptations? To try us, to sanctify us, to crown us.

He wishes to try us, and by means of the trial show us what we are and what we can do. Temptation shows each one his weakness and the need he has of the divine assistance; it manifests the cowardice and the hidden vices of their hearts; it sets forth the virtues of the good for the edification of their neighbor. . . .

God permits temptations to sanctify us more and more by purifying us as *gold is purified in the furnace* (Wis. iii. 6), and by exercising us in virtue.

Solid virtue is only acquired by exercise, and no exercise is more efficacious than that of temptation. *Power*, says St. Paul, *is made perfect in infirmity* (2 Cor. xii. 9). Baptism, says the Council of Trent, does not destroy concupiscence; God leaves it for souls to combat. This exercise at the same time stimulates our fervor and prevents us from falling into the sleep of tepidity or into a dangerous security.

Finally, God permits temptations that He may crown us—that is, to make us conquer a more brilliant crown. They are, in fact, an occasion of merit, a subject of triumph: *He that striveth for the mastery*, says the apostle, *is not crowned except he strive lawfully* (2 Tim. ii. 5).

Such are God's views in permitting temptation. But in order to correspond to these merciful views and turn temptation to the good of our souls we must conquer them.

Manner of conquering them. To conquer temptations there are general and particular rules to be followed.

1st. General rules. Before temptation take precautions, which consist in flight, vigilance, fasting, and prayer: *Prepare thy soul for temptation* (Ecclus. ii. 1).

At the approach of temptation, and while it endures, there must be, first, a prompt resistance—*Arrest the beginnings;* second, immovable confidence, that you may never lose courage—*God is faithful,* says the apostle; *He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able* (1 Cor. x. 13); third, patience, humility, and prayer—*By degrees and by patience, with longanimity, thou shalt by God's grace better overcome them than by harshness and thine own importunity* (*Imit.* i. 13).

After temptation, if you have remained victorious, humble yourself, thank God, and prepare yourself for new combats; if you have fallen, rise again by humble repentance, and at the same time be on your guard against a still more fatal temptation—I mean want of confidence, despondency, and discouragement.

2d. Particular rules for different kinds of temptations.

If you are tempted *against faith* do not be troubled, do not reason; be satisfied with making an act of faith, and quietly think of something else.

Against *hope and confidence* in God. Consider the goodness of our Saviour Jesus and the red sea of His blood.

Against *chastity*. Beware of being troubled and losing courage, as if it were impossible for you to resist. Fly danger and watch over your eyes. Resist at once, from the very first, with energy and constancy; for the salvation of your soul is concerned. Resist with the arms of contempt, prayer, and labor. . . .

Temptation to despondency. We must close our heart to sadness and melancholy by recalling how much reason we have to rejoice in Jesus Christ, by making use of some suitable diversion, by having recourse to some good and pleasant reading or to the great remedy of prayer. *Is any of you sad?* says St. James. *Let him pray* (Jas. v. 13).

Destroy the root of sadness, which is usually but a secret irritation of self-love, or an unfulfilled and frustrated desire, or an irregular affection which binds the heart to a creature.

Aridity. This kind of spiritual darkness and

distaste for piety will do the soul no harm if we well understand that they do not of their nature impede spiritual progress any more than an overcast sky impedes the progress of a traveller. We must know how to distinguish sensible and solid devotion, spiritual consolation and desolation. . . .

Fear in the confessional. Consider Jesus Christ in the person of the confessor. . . . Consider the consequences of a vain timidity. Is it not better to simply declare one's sins than to expiate them in eternal flames? Is it not better to discover one's weaknesses to one man than later to have them manifested to the whole world?

Scruples. We must obey; blind obedience is the only efficacious remedy for this malady of the soul.

Such are the means which faith and experience itself give us to triumph over different kinds of temptation. By employing them with courage and perseverance we not only shall not yield, but we shall make the trials and combats serve, according to God's designs, to enrich the crown which is reserved for us in heaven.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEADLY SINS.

Et vidi de mari bestiam ascendentem, habentem capita septem (I saw a beast coming up out of the sea having seven heads). —Apoc. xiii. 1.

IN speaking of the disorderly passions which we have to combat we have said that they were reduced to seven principal ones, which are usually called the seven capital vices or sins. They are called capital because they are so many chiefs which the others follow, and so many impure sources whence the others flow.

The seven capital sins represent the whole cortége of evil passions, a veritable infernal army, headed by pride, the king of vices and sins.

The seven vices spring from three great forms of concupiscence in the human heart: concupiscence of honors, that of pleasures, and that of the riches of this world. These three forms of concupiscence we find, under the names of pride, avarice, and lust, at the head of the other capital vices; they form three

branches of a cursed tree, the only root of which is egotism, or ill-regulated self-love, the principle of all our evil inclinations.

These ill-regulated inclinations, taken collectively, resemble the monster of the Apocalypse seen by St. John coming up out of the sea to ravage the earth and outrage heaven; it had seven heads, which represent the seven capital vices of which we speak.

To conquer this infernal hydra, which attacks each of us, we must crush all its heads—all, without exception; one spared will be sufficient to devour our soul. Yes, we must destroy all the capital sins; if one rule us it will cause our ruin; if we triumph over all of them our salvation is secured.

That we may better combat them let us make a few reflections on each in particular.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRIDE.

Superbiam nunquam in tuo sensu aut in tuo verbo dominari permittas (Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words).—Tob. iv. 14.

IF we must detest and fly all vices we must particularly abhor pride, the most detestable of all. Above all, no pride, says St. Francis of Sales; *all other vices rather than that one.*

What, then, is pride? Why is this vice so detestable? How shall we banish it from our hearts? As an answer to these questions let us give you an exposition of pride, with its remedies and the motives we have for combating it.

I. What is pride? Pride, which is frequently confounded with vanity and ambition, is a tendency to raise ourselves above our merits and our baseness. We may call it an inflation of mind and heart which impels man to arrogate to himself a greatness which he does not possess. It is an inflation of the mind, for a proud man forms a false idea of himself, ima-

gining himself possessed of great qualities and few or no faults; believes he is justified in glorifying himself, while he is only dust and nothingness, sin and weakness. An inflated heart: the proud man aspires to a high place; he desires to rise above others and above his condition; he will suffer no contradiction or resistance. He arrogates to himself a greatness which he does not possess. God alone is great; man, God's creature, is but dust and ashes, or rather he is a sinner worthy of all humiliation. . . .

What further is pride? The most subtle and insinuating of vices; it glides, unconsciously to ourselves, into our thoughts, our words, and sometimes into our holiest actions. . . .

II. Motives. Why must we detest and combat pride? 1st. Because it is the vice of the evil one, the spirit of pride, who, having dared to liken himself to God, was cast into the eternal abyss; *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High* (Isaias xiv. 13, 14). Such was Lucifer's cry, and such is the language of all his imitators.

2d. Pride, the Scripture tells us, is an odious and detestable vice in the eyes of God and man: *Odibilis coram Deo et hominibus superbia* (Ecclus. x. 7). The proud man is detested by God, whose benefits he forgets, whose glory he robs, and whose authority he despises. *May the Lord de-*

stroy the tongue that speaketh proud things, who have said: We will magnify our tongue; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? (Ps. xi. 4, 5). He is detested by his fellow-men, whom he despises, depreciates, and whose rights he violates. Arrogant and selfish, his aim is to rule, and impose his ideas and his will upon every one, and keep the whole world at his feet.

3d. Pride is a ridiculous vice which renders man foolish and contemptible. How foolish, in fact, it is to glorify one's self because of gifts which are another's! *What hast thou*, says the apostle, *that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). What folly to forget that we are dust and ashes! Had man a head of gold, like the statue of Nabuchodonosor, his feet would never be but clay, making him ever liable to fall. What folly, finally, to imagine ourselves great, distinguished by our beauty, our talents, our ability, when these qualities, as it usually happens, exist only in our imagination! The sheaves which hold their heads highest in a field of grain are empty, and the most resounding vases only give forth so much sound because they are hollow within. The peacock, the symbol of pride, in spite of his brilliant plumage, is no less an ordinary bird with very ugly feet and a most discordant note.

4th. Pride is a very fatal vice. When it takes possession of a heart it engenders therein all vices, all sins. *Never suffer pride*, said Tobias, *to reign in thy mind or in thy words* (Tobias iv. 14). And we are told in Ecclesiasticus that *pride is the beginning of all sin* (Ecclus. x. 15).

Whence, in fact, come disobedience, a spirit of independence and revolt, incredulity and impiety, if not from pride which will not submit? Whence is a soul in subjection to all its passions, even to impurity? Because of pride, which God punishes by permitting a soul to fall into this degrading slavery. *When they knew God*, says St. Paul, *they have not glorified Him, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves wise, they became fools. . . . For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections* (Rom. i. 21–26). Yes, God thus punished their pride, for St. James tells us: *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble* (iv. 6).

III. Remedies. To free ourselves from pride, or to preserve ourselves from it, we must, 1st, watch over our thoughts and our words, in order to exclude from them anything that savors of ostentation or a vain complacency in ourselves.

2d. Attribute to God the glory of all good: *Not to us, Lord, but to Thy name give glory* (Ps. cxiii. 1).

3d. Never forget the humility or the humiliations of Jesus Christ. . . .

4th. Fear the chastisements with which God never fails to visit the proud. . . .

5th. Think of our past and our future—that is, of the nothingness whence we were drawn, and of the tomb where our earthly career will soon end.

6th. Think of our actual misery. If we would easily banish temptations to pride let us contemplate ourselves in the light of faith as God sees us—nothings clothed with existence; poor sinners subsisting solely by grace and the infinite mercy of God.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AVARICE.

Radix malorum omnium est cupiditas (The desire of money is the root of all evils).—1 Tim. vi., 10.

AVARICE is a vice so ignoble that its name alone inspires disgust. Let us consider what we must understand by avarice, how abhorrent a vice it is, and what is its remedy.

I. As pride is an inordinate love of glory, so avarice is a passion or an inordinate love for the riches of the earth. We say inordinate, ill-regulated love, because we can care for the riches of this world in an honest and lawful way. We may have wealth, gain money, increase our possessions, but our hearts must not be attached to them. The Saviour Himself had a little money for His own and His disciples' maintenance, and there was one of them who was purse-bearer. We may labor, trade, exercise our ingenuity in business; nothing is more laudable, provided we fulfil a double condition. 1st. We must labor for a Christian end: for example, to live suitably according to our position, to properly rear our children, or even

to increase our fortune and improve our condition.

2d. Our labor and enterprises must be honest, and our first attention must be given to the service of God. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matt. vi. 33).

A love of riches is ill-regulated; 1st. When it is immoderate or too solicitous. *Be not solicitous for to-morrow*, says the Saviour—*be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?* (Matt. vi.) 2d. When we attach our hearts to riches or seek them for a bad end—either to hoard them or to satisfy vanity or other passions. When we seek them by illicit means, such as working on Sunday, excessive and absorbing labor, dishonest enterprises. Thus it would be an ill-regulated love of money and gain which would prompt us to sell ourselves to the enemies of the Church for a position or any temporal advantage.

Therefore it is evident that the name miser not only applies to those who hoard or who are penurious in giving and slow to pay, but that there are many others to whom the stigma of avarice clings.

One is avaricious when he makes temporal possessions the principal end of his existence here below.

One is avaricious when he seeks riches for an end which is not Christian nor subordinate to salvation.

One is avaricious when he is too much taken up with temporal things, when he lacks confidence in God to obtain them and seeks them at the expense of his soul's salvation.

One is avaricious when he does nothing but accumulate riches upon riches and is never satisfied.

One is avaricious when he gives nothing to the poor, on pretext that he has nothing to spare, and at the same time is unwilling to reduce his expenses to a just limit.

One is avaricious when he presses his debtors too severely.

One is avaricious when he is willing to acquire money unjustly, or by any means contrary to conscience and religion.

One is avaricious when, because of a wrong or a pecuniary loss, he hates his neighbor, abandons himself to despair, or murmurs against Providence.

Finally, one is avaricious when he esteems too highly the goods of this life and prefers them to eternal treasures, contrary to the teaching of our Saviour, who tells us: *Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal* (Matt. vi. 20).

II. Detestation. We must detest avarice because it is a debasing and very fatal vice.

1st. Avarice is a debasing vice. We despise a miser, and he merits contempt. His heart, attached to earth, has no nobility or greatness. Buried, as it were, in material things, he has no thoughts that are not material, narrow, and base; everything with him is a question of money—he beholds no other thing. In vain do you speak to him of virtue, good works, the riches of the soul, the treasures of the mind. He understands you not. *The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. ii. 14). Yes; were he clothed in golden raiment he is still a sensual man—*animalis homo*. He is less than this: wholly buried in the coffers and metal which he adores, his being seems to be identified with the objects of his affection, and he preserves but the semblance of a man.

2d. Avarice is an extravagant vice. Is it not folly to love riches, which are such an obstacle to salvation? *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* (Luke xviii. 24).

Is it not folly to so ardently seek possessions which death can take from us at any moment? How much of all his wealth shall the rich man bear away with him?

Is it not folly to hoard wealth, which will be-

come the prey of ungrateful and mocking heirs?

Is it not folly to leave unproductive perishable riches by which we may gain heaven and immortal treasure?

3d. Avarice is a very fatal vice—a principle of sin, of crime, of unhappiness in this life and the next.

The thirst for money, for gain impels men to injustice, to perjury, to hatred, to murder.

Love of riches leads men to impiety, to forget their salvation, to forget God. *No man can serve two masters*, says Jesus Christ. *You cannot serve God and mammon* (Matt. vi. 24). These words explain the following words of the apostle: *Covetousness is the service of idols* (Col. iii. 5).

He who is ruled by a passion for money scruples nothing. He sells his conscience, his soul, his God, after the example of Judas. . . .

The man who places his happiness in riches is insensible to the sufferings of the poor. He dreams but of himself, his enjoyments, his pleasures, as we see exemplified by the rich man in the Bible (Luke xvi. 19).

The man whose heart is attached to temporal things is not happy. He is ever disquieted and troubled, and when he begins to rest in his abundance death comes upon him and robs him of all his possessions. *God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and*

whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? (Luke xii. 20).

Yes; death comes also to the rich and the avaricious—*Mortuus est et dives.* But what was the death of the rich man who despised Lazarus? What was the death of Judas, who sold his Master? . . . *The covetous*, says the apostle, *shall not possess the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. vi. 10).

III. The remedy. What is the remedy for so great an evil?

1st. Almsgiving. . . .

2d. The teaching and example of Jesus Christ. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, He tells us, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3). *Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings* (Luke xvi. 9).

Such is avarice, the second of the seven deadly sins. Let us ask the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and watch over ourselves that we may ever exclude it from our heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LUST.

Fugite fornicationem. . . . Neque fornicarii, neque idolis servientes, neque adulteri, neque molles regnum Dei possidebunt (Fly fornication. . . . Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of God).—1 Cor. vi. 9.

THE third of the seven deadly sins is lust. It is of all vices the one which most dishonors humanity. It is a vice which the tongues of all peoples proclaim infamous; a vice which is the shame of a reasonable creature, a dishonor to the Church of Christ, the pest of souls, the triumph of hell; a vice the very name of which, according to St. Paul, should be ignored among Christians, and we would we were dispensed from naming it before the children of the purest of virgins. But as it hides 'neath a flowery veil, in the shelter of which it exercises its ravages, we must destroy the veil and exhibit the monster in its hideous turpitude. Let us speak, then, of impurity; let us show its malignity and the remedies against it.

I. Hideousness and malice. Impurity is a vice degrading, abominable, contagious, disastrous in its consequences.

1st. A degrading vice. It is not without reason that two of the most unclean animals, the goat and the hog, have been chosen as emblems of impurity, which pollutes and profanes all that is noblest and holiest in man. The image of God imprinted in his soul; the thoughts of his mind, the affections of his heart; his body, become through baptism the temple of the Holy Spirit; his flesh, all his senses, his eyes, his ears, his hands, his mouth, his tongue sanctified in Holy Communion by the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ—all are polluted and profaned by the uncleanness of the impure vice.

The human creature whom God has raised almost to the rank of the angels lowers himself by impurity to the level of an animal. The sin of a proud man is that of a fallen angel; the covetous man sins as a man; the impure man imitates the animal who delights in his uncleanness and wallows in the mire, who has no other instincts but the enjoyment of the most ignoble pleasures. Not only does he follow the instincts of the brute, but he degrades his whole being to the point of losing all sentiment of honor, or thought of God or of death which threatens him; just as an animal sees the companion sleeping at its side led off to the slaugh-

ter and scarcely raises its head, but continues its sleep.

The Christian raised to the dignity of a child of God by baptism becomes through impurity a vile slave—the slave of the devil and the most tyrannical passions. After having spent all his means in riotous living *he went*, says our Saviour, speaking of the prodigal, *and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him* (Luke xv. 15, 16).

2d. An abominable vice. The fruit of lust is mortal sin, but mortal sin multiplied infinitely and under every form. Impurity, once mistress of the heart, becomes a source of criminal thoughts, words, and actions, of envy, of hatred, of theft, of sacrilege. . . .

3d. A contagious vice. The impure man seeks accomplices; he becomes a corrupter of others. He spreads corruption wherever he goes; he is a pestilence which we must fly as we would death.

4th. A vice disastrous in its consequences. Impurity withers the flower of youth, poisons health and life. It fills hearts with despondency and remorse. It robs its victims of honor, mind, and fortune, and their families of peace and happiness; finally it leads them to a bad

death and eternal perdition. Impurity is the largest gate of hell. . . .

Such is the vice of impurity. Shall we not abhor it, fly from it, and resist it with every remedy?

II. Remedies. There are remedies against impurity, either to cure wounds it has already made in the soul or to preserve the soul from its stains. The following are the principal remedies:

1st. The triple flight of occasions, idleness, intemperance. . . .

2d. Love of chastity. This virtue, the charms and beauty of which are extolled in Holy Scripture, is like the pearl of Christian virtues. It renders men like unto angels; it is the guardian of peace of heart, and becomes a fruitful source of other virtues and of all kinds of good works. . . .

3d. Prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and our good angel. . . .

4th. Frequenting the sacraments.

5th. Prayer, mortification, and labor.

6th. Modesty and guarding the senses.

7th. Humility.

8th. The remembrance of our last end and of the presence of God. . . .

9th. Respect for ourselves, for our bodies, for our dignity. As Christians we should preserve our bodies and our souls in the most perfect

purity, for they have been consecrated to God in Holy Baptism, which made us members of Jesus Christ, living temples of the Holy Spirit; and because we have been sanctified by the Body and Blood of the Son of God in Holy Communion.

Behold the remedies and the preservatives of this beautiful virtue of chastity. Let us ask the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, to inspire us with a keen and ever-increasing horror for all that could tarnish it.

CHAPTER XXV.

ENVY.

Invidia diaboli mors introivit in orbem terrarum : imitantur autem illum, qui sunt ex parte illius (By the envy of the devil death came into the world).—Wis. ii. 24.

THE fourth of the deadly sins is envy, jealousy. Let us see in what this vice consists, why we must abhor it, and what is the remedy for it.

I. Envy consists in grieving at the success of others and rejoicing in their misfortunes. When this passion develops in a heart it fills it with a bitter melancholy and an implacable hatred for merit and virtue, particularly if these good qualities dazzle or eclipse the envious. The mixture of these frightful and unjust sentiments forms the proper character of envy. We must not confound the vice of envy with emulation, which is the virtue, the sentiment of a noble heart. Emulation is a desire to equal, to surpass the good qualities of our neighbor; envy is an enemy which would destroy them.

This vile passion springs from a secret pride which makes one believe himself lessened by the elevation of others. Hence the very different impression experienced by the envious at sight of their neighbor's happiness and at sight of his reverses. If he succeeds they are grieved and regard him with an evil eye. If he fails or meets with a humiliation they triumph with a malicious joy which they conceal in the depths of their hearts.

Envy is the mark of a bad nature and is never to be found in a generous heart. A noble heart shares the joys as well as the sufferings of his neighbor; he rejoices in his happiness and grieves at his misfortunes: *Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus* (Rom. xii. 15). The envious, on the contrary, rejoice in the tears and feed upon the humiliations and misfortunes of their brothers.

We sin through envy in several ways: 1st, by yielding to the evil sentiments which this vice inspires; 2d, by speaking under its influence, holding conversations dictated by envy, changing words of blame, criticism, and detraction into affected praise, the better to conceal and insinuate the venom of disparagement and detraction.

II. Motives for flying envy. 1st. Envy is a base passion which lodges in wicked, ignoble hearts. Wherever it appears it is despised and

abhorred; it blushes for itself, and it is for this reason that it always seeks concealment.

2d. Envy engenders a multitude of sins: rash judgments, detraction, malicious joy at sight of the faults or trials of others, hatred, vexations of every kind, frequently even murders and the most atrocious cruelties.

3d. It is the crime of the evil one, of Cain, of the brothers of Joseph, of the Jews: *Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him* (Matt. xxvii. 18).

4th. Envy poisons the peace and happiness of life; once it fastens upon a heart it consumes it as the worm does the wood, it corrodes it like rust upon iron.

III. Remedy. The remedy for this detestable vice is fraternal charity, contempt for earthly goods, and Christian humility. . . . Should you find yourself the victim of the envy of others, beware of manifesting contempt or hatred, which would only imbitter them; you should, on the contrary, conduct yourself with that humility, that Christian charity which appeases envy and which *overcomes evil by good* (Rom. xii. 21).

CHAPTER XXVI.

GLUTTONY.

Quorum Deus venter est: et gloria in confusione ipsorum, qui terrena sapiunt (Whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things).—PHIL. iii. 19.

LUTTONY, the fifth of the deadly sins, is an inordinate love of food and drink, or the evil inclination which impels man to the inordinate use of food.

There is nothing more reasonable than to nourish our bodies with food, provided reason rule our appetite. Reason tells us to use food only for the preservation of our strength and life. If we wander from this rule we are guilty of gluttony, which for this reason is called an *inordinate love* or *immoderate use* of food and drink.

We say *food* and *drink*, because gluttony can be exercised in both these things. Gluttony in drink is called *drunkenness*, or intemperance.

How do we sin by gluttony? And why should we fly this vice with horror?

I. Sins of gluttony. We are guilty of glut-

tony, 1st, in quantity—when we eat or drink to excess; 2d, in quality—when we are too eager for delicate or rare dishes; 3d, in our way of eating—when we eat greedily, or between meals, or without pausing to say a prayer before the repast; 4th, because of the end we have in view—when we eat for the sole pleasure of eating, to gratify sensuality; when we think only of the table, and speak of nothing but good cheer; 5th, because of the violation of a precept—when we transgress the law of fasting or abstinence.

II. Motives for avoiding gluttony. We must fly gluttony, 1st, because it is a detestable vice in the eyes of God, who punished it severely in Adam and Eve, in the wicked rich man of the Gospel, in the Israelites during their sojourn in the desert. Yielding to gluttony, they asked for other food, and the meats were still in their mouths when God's anger was enkindled against them.

2d. It is a very fatal vice to man, injurious to soul and body. It ruins his health, darkens his mind, abases the sentiments of his heart, forms an obstacle to prayer and all pious exercises; man, becoming wholly animal, *perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God.*

Moreover, gluttony degrades man, as we see from the two animals, the dog and hog, which are chosen to represent this vice. . . .

Finally, it nourishes all vices, particularly lust and sloth. . . .

3d. Intemperance particularly has the effect of brutalizing man, whom it converts into a disgusting animal, so that the ancient Lacedæmonians, to inspire their children with a horror of this vice, used to show them an intoxicated slave. Intemperance robs man of his reason, his honor, his means; it makes him a blasphemous, impure creature, a slave, a sinner almost incorrigible in vice, the scourge of his family, an idolater who makes a god of his stomach, and finally, except in rare cases of conversion, a soul condemned to eternal perdition.

Then let us fly all that leads to this deplorable vice, of which it is so easy to contract a habit. . . . Let us always love temperance and sobriety, bearing in mind the salutary warning of St. Peter: *Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. v. 8).

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANGER.

Qui irascitur fratri suo reus erit iudicio (Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment) —MATT. v. 22.

NGER, the sixth of the deadly sins, is an inordinate emotion, transport of the soul, which impels us to reject with violence anything that thwarts us.

It is an *emotion*—that is, an agitation which troubles the calm of the soul, which inflames and enkindles the blood, producing within man a tempest which soon breaks forth in violent words and actions.

It is an *inordinate* transport, for it is neither ruled nor guided by reason, which should always remain mistress of the soul's movements, as a driver must always hold the reins, if he would not have the steeds run away with him. Anger *rejects* the obstacles, whether persons or things, which cross its path. It is not forbidden to resist an unjust aggression; we are even permitted to remove any contradiction, when we can do so by lawful means; but very often it is necessary to charitably endure it. *Charity beareth all things* (1 Cor. xiii. 7). *Be not overcome*

by evil, but overcome evil by good (Rom. xii. 21). *What a man cannot amend in himself or others he must bear with patience till God ordains otherwise* (*Imit.* i. 16). Anger repels what thwarts it, and repels it with violence after the manner of unreasoning animals. It is necessary at times to use force, but it should be used with reflection; then it becomes laudable energy. Unreasoning force, the effect of anger, is brute violence.

Let us consider the sins anger produces, the evils it causes, and the remedies against it.

I. How do we sin by anger? 1st. Anger engenders a multitude of sins, which are divided into three classes: Interior sins—of hatred, contempt, aversion, desire of vengeance; sins in words—against God and our neighbor, blasphemies, imprecations, raillery, disputes, detraction, calumny; sins in action—disputes, wrangles, unlawful violence, evil proceedings and injustices against our neighbor.

Anger has degrees: it is first simple impatience, an irritable emotion; then it becomes a transport which may reach the pitch of fury, rage, frenzy. It resembles the heat of iron, which increases in intensity to a red heat, then to incandescence. Hence the expressions burning with anger, boiling with rage, inflamed with wrath. . . .

While anger is kept within certain limits,

and we are not immoderately moved by it, it is only a venial fault; when it is violent and leads us into some great sin against God or our neighbor it becomes a mortal sin.

II. The evils of anger. Anger is a very fatal vice, both to him who allows himself to be governed by it and to those upon whom it is exercised.

1st. To him who allows this passion to govern him—it robs him of his dignity, making him a sort of beast, a surly dog, a vicious wolf, a frenzied animal, a madman: *ira furor brevis est.*

It robs him of all power of persuasion: *Thou art angry*, says the proverb, *therefore thou art in the wrong.* A moderate man is always heeded, like one of the ancients who said to a violent counsellor: Strike, but hear me.

It robs him of the affection and confidence of his fellow-men. A violent man is not loved; he makes himself enemies everywhere.

It deprives him of judgment and prudence. Anger is an *evil counsellor;* it leads man astray by blinding him

It destroys interior peace, and even health.

It deprives him of eternal salvation by leading him to blasphemy and other grave sins.

2d. Anger is equally fatal to others. It disturbs the peace of families and causes the most deplorable evils in society—hatreds, murders, and sometimes disastrous wars.

III. Remedies. To calm the anger of others nothing is more efficacious than a peaceful silence, a sweet moderation, or a kind, modest answer. *A mild answer breaketh wrath*, says the Scripture, *but a harsh word stirreth up fury* (Prov. xv. 1).

To cure ourselves of anger or to preserve ourselves from the vice we must devote ourselves to the practice of Christian patience, to imitating the sweetness, the humility and silence of Jesus Christ, conquering ourselves with generosity after the example of St. Francis de Sales. *We must seize the reins of anger*, says the holy doctor, *and hold them with both hands. I have made a compact with my tongue*, he adds: *we have agreed that we will never speak while my heart is moved.* And again: *A sovereign remedy against sudden emotions of impatience is a sweet and modest silence.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SLOTH.

Multam malitiam docuit otiositas (Idleness hath taught much evil).—ECCLUS. xxxiii. 29.

SLOTH, the last of the seven deadly sins, is an inordinate love of rest, a languor of the soul, a disgust for the labor of duty.

We say *inordinate love of rest*, for man needs rest, relaxation, just as he does food; but he should seek it only after labor, and as far as it is necessary to restore his energies.

It is a disgust for the labor of duty. There are occupations, foreign to our duties, to which sloth itself leads us to devote ourselves. Sloth does not always mean absolute idleness; this vice consists also in relative idleness—that is, when we are idle and slothful in the performance of the labors required of us.

Thus, we are slothful not only when instead of working we lose our time in unnecessary rest or sleep, in chatting, promenading, or amusing ourselves, but also when, instead of fulfilling our obligations of prayer and other

Christian duties, we occupy ourselves with exterior things and bodily labor.

Why must we fly idleness? What are the remedies against this vice?

I. Motives. We must abhor and fly idleness because it is a shameful vice in itself and fatal in its effects.

1st. It is a shameful vice. The name alone of sloth is dishonoring and repellant; he who merits it meets only with contempt and rebuffs.

2d. It is a source of ennui, and frequently of indignation also against superiors who are obliged to spur on the slothful.

3d. It is a source of ignorance. . . .

4th. It is a source of negligence and sin. . . . *Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth* (Apoc. iii. 16). *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully* (Jerem. xlviii. 10.) Say not, I injure no one. It is a vain excuse; you fail in your duty and you offend God.

An idle life is a wicked life, productive of impurity, evil thoughts, evil conversations, debauches, the most criminal conspiracies. *While men were asleep*, says the Saviour, *the enemy came and sowed cockle among the wheat.* Idleness is well named the devil's pillow. He who abandons himself to idleness does not need a devil to tempt him; he is a temptation to himself. Therefore let *the devil find you always*

occupied, says St. Jerome. If he find you idle he will have no difficulty in overcoming you, as we see by the sad examples of Samson, David, and Solomon. . . .

The slothful soul is an uncultivated land, a stagnant pool, a rust-eaten plough abandoned in the field.

5th. It is the cause of the greatest evils: loss of time, indigence; it makes one despised by men, and brings upon him the chastisements of God. Behold the consequences of sloth.

The slothful servant in the Gospel who buried his talent is cast into exterior darkness, and the barren tree is cursed by our Saviour and condemned to the fire.

II. Remedies. How shall we preserve ourselves from sloth? How shall we combat this vice? What are its remedies?

There are fortunately several efficacious remedies.

1st. There is a spirit of labor, a love of labor. We confirm ourselves in this virtue by remembering that man is born to labor, as the bird is born to fly; that labor is a universal law. Nothing is obtained without labor, while with persevering labor we can accomplish all things. . . .

2d. The example of God and of Jesus Christ: *My Father worketh until now, and I work* (John v. 17).

3d. The example of the apostles, of the saints, of worldlings themselves, who labor so unremittingly for the goods of this world; finally, the example of all creatures. . . .

4th. The thought of our reward and our eternal rest. . . .

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin to make us ever abhor idleness and to obtain us a spirit of labor; for, in the words of our Saviour, *we must work while it is still day: the night cometh when no man can work* (John ix. 4).

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WORLD.

Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quæ in mundo sunt (Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world).—1 JOHN ii. 15.

THE ministers of the divine word, charged by Jesus Christ to instruct the faithful, speak frequently in the pulpit of the world, the enemy of Christ, and they urge the faithful to fly, to abhor, to trample this perverse world under their feet. If this language, which is but that of the apostles and of Jesus Christ Himself, were well understood and practised with docility, it would suffice to save from spiritual ruin a great number of souls who are lost. Let us on our part endeavor to comprehend it and faithfully conform ourselves to its teaching.

What must we understand by the world, the enemy of Christ? How must we combat and conquer it?

I. What is the world? By the world condemned in the Gospel is meant the men of this world, the goods of this world, the false principles and maxims of the world.

1st. The men of this world, or worldly men —that is, those who love and seek the things of this world and who follow its maxims; who, strangers to the spirit of Christ, to His humility, His piety, His mortification, are animated by the spirit of the world, the spirit of pride and ambition, of cupidity and sensuality, of selfishness and hatred—these men walk in the broad way after Satan, whom the Saviour calls the prince of this world.

2d. In the second place, the world signifies the goods of this world—namely, riches, honors, renown, luxury, and the pleasures of life. These goods are false, dangerous, and frequently criminal. They are false because they cannot give us happiness and are too short lived to be of any value to immortal souls. They are dangerous because they lead to pride, become a source of temptation and occasions of sin. They are frequently criminal, because they are unjust, like ill-gotten wealth, or culpable and contrary to the law of God, like the pleasures of impurity—a vice which too frequently mingles with the joys of this world and stains nearly all its amusements.

3d. By the world condemned in the Gospel is meant also the false principles and maxims of the world. These principles, opposed to those of the Gospel, uphold the absolute independence of man, the worship of corporal well-be-

ing, contempt for the things of God, servility to fashion and human respect. Here is how we may express them: *Let us crown ourselves with roses to-day, for to-morrow we shall be no more! Happy the rich! Happy those who are renowned and attract all eyes! Happy those who know how to triumph over their rivals! Happy those who have wherewith to gratify the desires of their hearts! We must do as others do. We must be the friend of Cæsar. Money before everything, then virtue. Piety is narrowness and an obstacle. Liberty consists in freeing one's self from the restraints of the Gospel and satisfying one's passions. One must follow the fashion. One must be prudent and conceal his thoughts. Might makes right.*

These maxims constitute a law which may be called that of the world opposed to that of the Gospel, which tells us: *Blessed are the poor. Choose the last place. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Love your enemies. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice' sake.*

We see that the law of the world is the reverse of that of Jesus Christ; we may say, then, with St. Bernard, *Aut mundus errat aut Christus fallitur*—the world is in error or Jesus Christ is mistaken. We know that Christ cannot be mistaken, therefore we must attach ourselves to Jesus Christ and despise the world, *that we may not be condemned with this world* (1 Cor. xi. 32).

II. Now, how are we to triumph over the world? How are we to combat and conquer it?

How are we to triumph over the world? By faith, by flight, by contempt, by the grace of Jesus Christ.

1st. By faith. *This is the victory which overcometh the world* (1 John v. 4). Faith will render us victorious—faith which teaches us that no one can serve two masters, that he who is not for Christ is against Him; faith which shows us Jesus Christ triumphing over the world on His cross and saying to us: Courage! confidence! I have overcome the world; faith which relies upon grace to conquer like the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins. Then let us have faith but the size of a mustard-seed, and we shall remove mountains and cast them into the sea (Mark xi. 23).

2d. By flight. Whoever wishes to triumph over the world must fly from it—that is, he must fly its culpable or dangerous pleasures; fly its luxury and its vanities; separate himself from its partisans to associate himself with true, good Christians and walk resolutely in the way traced by Jesus Christ.

3d. By contempt. We must despise the goods of this world because they are false; the fashion and the laws of this world because they are tyrannical; the promises of the world and its flatteries because they are deceitful; the threats

of the world because they are impotent; the judgment of the world because it is unjust; human respect, or the fear of displeasing the world, because this fear is cowardly and unfounded. . . .

4th. By the grace of Jesus Christ. Grace, which we derive from prayer and the sacraments, raises us above the world, enables us to trample it under foot, and causes us to realize these great words: *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity* (Eccles. i. 2). *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen, because the spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it* (Isaias xl. 6, 7). *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). *What is all that worth for eternity?* (St. Aloysius). *I am born for greater things* (St. Stanislaus). *How base the earth appears when I contemplate heaven!* (St. Ignatius). Such are the means of triumphing over the world. Honor to those who achieve this beautiful victory! They are great in the eyes of God and men; they are happy as well, and enjoy the sweet liberty of the children of God

This victory shall be ours; the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, will obtain us the grace and strength to despise vanity and trample the world under our feet.

CHAPTER XXX

DOUBLE PRINCIPLE OF CONDUCT—DUTY AND NATURAL INCLINATION.

In quo corrigit adolescentior viam suam? In custodiendo sermones tuos (By what doth a young man correct his way? By observing thy words).—Ps. cxviii. 9.

WHEN I consider the world I see men going through life by a thousand different paths, which soon are concentrated into two very opposite ways; one is called the broad road and the other the narrow road. At the beginning of life men begin to separate into two classes which follow one or the other of these ways. That which determines their course is the diversity of principle and motive which influences them: one follows the principle of duty, and the other natural inclination, the instinct of interest, ambition, pleasure, or amusement.

Let us consider the nature and consequences of these two principles of action: I. Principle of duty; II. The principle of natural inclination.

1. Principle of duty. We act through a prin-

ciple of duty when we do, not what pleases us, but what is right; not what we would like to do if we consulted our natural inclinations or our passions, but what God requires of us, what our parents, our masters, and our superiors require of us, what honesty and justice require of us—in a word, what our conscience commands and prescribes. Such is the rule, the principle of duty; and it is the true rule of human life, the true principle which should guide us—an honorable, invariable, and ever-victorious principle.

1st. An honorable principle. The finest eulogium you can bestow upon a man is to say, *He fulfils all his duties*, for it is affirming that he is irreproachable in everything, that there is neither fault nor weakness in him, that he is a perfect man. Whatever this man may be, whatever his social position, were he the poorest laborer, provided he fulfil his duty, not only need he blush before no one, but he has a right to the respect of all men, and he is more truly honorable than the rich and noble of this world, who, under a brilliant exterior, too frequently conceal shameful vices or base negligence.

Whoever acts through duty is sheltered from blame. He may dissatisfy certain minds and provoke unjust complaint, but he can never be censured for doing his duty. All honest minds must do him justice and give him praise.

Finally, the line of duty is the rule of a reasonable man, the golden line of truth and wisdom; to follow it faithfully is to walk in honor before God, before men, and before his conscience.

2d. Invariable principle. In following the line of duty one is always consistent with himself, always equal to himself, because he obeys a principle as invariable as truth. Interests, tastes, passions, change like the winds and clouds; duty, like the sun, never changes.

Hence follows constancy, the grand condition of success in all enterprises. No illusion, no obstacles arrest a man who acts through a principle of duty; he pursues his course, not like the idler who comes and goes, but like the intrepid traveller who, indifferent to the variations of the atmosphere, to the curiosities of the countries through which he journeys, thinks only of continuing the route which leads to his destination. The course of him who is guided by duty is as direct and fixed as that of a railway train moving on its iron track; without this principle one is only a helpless bark abandoned to the impulsion of every wind and tide.

3d. A victorious principle. Do you desire success, happiness, peace, as far as it is possible to possess them here below? Have duty always in view. Thus you shall always have equity and justice before you. Now, justice is

the great principle of prosperity and success, as well as the pledge of benedictions from above. *Justice exalteth a nation: but sin maketh nations miserable* (Prov. xiv. 34). *The throne of a king shall be established with justice* (Prov. xxv. 5). *Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord*—that is, in duty. *He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off* (Ps. i. 2, 3). Not thus is it with the unjust and fraudulent man: *Non sic impii, non sic.* By fraud or violence, by unjust or underhand means, he may attain power or fortune; but his prosperity, built upon sand, shall not endure; it will crumble and bury him in its ruins. Ill-gotten fortune is a heap of sand which the breath of the storm shall disperse.

True happiness, which consists particularly in the peace of a good conscience, is the natural fruit of accomplished duty. How pleasant it is to be able to say: *I have done my duty!* How consoling to hear in the depth of our heart this testimony of the Holy Spirit: *Thou hast done what thou shouldst do. I am content with thee.*

Another source of happiness is the merit of actions performed through a principle of duty. No actions are void before God; all being accomplished for Him and for His service will be rewarded by Him. Therefore ineffable will be the satisfaction of a man at the judgment-seat

who has utilized all his moments. Looking back upon the past, he shall see that all his days were complete, for they were given to the fulfilment of his duties and the will of God. He can say with St. Paul: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the just judge will render me* (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8); and with the Saviour Himself: *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do* (John xvii. 4). Then we must engrave in our heart the vital principle of duty and the golden rule which springs therefrom, *What is right, and not what is pleasing;* and this maxim of noble souls, *Do what is right, come what may!*

II. Natural inclination. To follow one's natural inclination is to act through caprice, taste, humor, interest, or any other motive which is not that of duty. Whatever the motive, it proceeds originally from a triple principle: ambition, interest, pleasure or amusement. Each time we act through a motive of amusement, ambition, or interest we are obeying a natural inclination, which we thus make the principle of our action.

Now, this principle is base and unworthy of man; it is versatile and unstable; it is very fatal.

1st. A principle base and unworthy of man.

Man should be guided by reason, and not by blind instincts after the manner of animals. The latter, possessing neither light nor intelligence, have nothing to guide them but their senses and their grosser instincts ; but man, enlightened by a ray of divine light, sees before him a nobler path in which he must walk. If he close his eyes to this light and follow but the bent of his natural inclinations, he lowers himself to the rank of the animals and becomes like unto the brute. Look at an animal ; pressed by the appetites of his senses, he falls upon the first prey which meets his eye ; he grows incensed if it be disputed with him ; he eats, he drinks in all places and at all times ; he runs, he sleeps according as he desires. Such is the man who is guided only by the inclinations of flesh and blood. *Man when he was in honor*, says the Holy Spirit, *did not understand ; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them* (Ps. xlviii. 13).

2d. A versatile principle. There is nothing more changing than natural inclination, passion, interest. That which pleases you to-day will be displeasing to-morrow ; that which favors you to-day will thwart you to-morrow ; in a word, human things change like the clouds of the sky, like the wind which impels them in every direction. Such is also the mobility of our temporal interests and our tastes, and such shall

consequently be the mobility of one who is guided by them. One while he will respect religion, he will apply himself to labor, and another while he will give himself up to sloth, abandon piety and virtue; he is a reed, a leaf moved by every wind, a weather-vane turning in every direction. Whence is this mobility, this inconsistency, as ridiculous as it is deplorable? From the principle which guides him, or rather from the absence of principle; for, properly speaking, he is what is called a man without principle.

3d. A very fatal principle. What becomes of a bark without a helm in the midst of the ocean? Abandoned to the mercy of the winds and waves, it first becomes their sport and then is dashed upon a rock or swallowed up in the abyss. Behold the image of man freed from the restraints of duty; his life will be vicious, unhappy, and his end evil.

Obedient to his natural propensities, too frequently opposed to the requirements of duty and the law of God, such a man commits sins and faults without number, and contracts the habit of all vices: *His ways are filthy at all times* (Ps. x. 5). His whole life is dragged through mire and filth.

You will urge, perhaps, that all propensities are not bad nor all amusement sin, and that you only aspire to amuse yourselves in a be-

coming manner. We do not speak here of honest amusements, which are in reality lawful relaxations; but of that way of living which has no other rule than amusement and what is called a life of amusement and pleasure. Such a life can never be innocent nor Christian.

And, moreover, even supposing it exempt from great disorders, what merit would it have for heaven? Is it not at least sterile for eternity? And if, as Jesus Christ teaches, we must render an account of every idle word, what shall it be when we must account before the tribunal of God for a whole life which shall have been idle?

In following the bent of his inclinations man seeks here below happiness and pleasure; but he will find only disappointment, and in the depth of his heart emptiness and weariness. Walking in the broad way which leads from God, he has pursued troublesome ways and he knew not the way of peace. *Et viam pacis non cognoverunt* (Ps. xiii. 3.)

And where finally does he end? In death, inevitable death. Yes, a life of pleasure passes like a life of duty, and ends in death. But in what a death! *O Death*, says the Holy Spirit, *how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man who has peace in his possessions* (Ecclus. xli. 1). He must leave all that he has loved so much. These riches, these pleasures, these honors es-

cape him; all his joys are passed away: *Transierunt omnia illa* (Wisdom v. 9). He sees his blessings vanish like smoke; and, what is more bitter still, he sees his whole life devoid of virtues, filled with sins; it is a chain of iniquity which he must drag after him, and with which he is about to appear before the throne of God.

What a death was that of the sensual man of whom our Saviour speaks! *The rich man also died, and he was buried in hell* (Luke xvi. 22). Behold the fatal term of a life of pleasure into which one is led who allows himself to be guided by his natural inclinations instead of following the noble principle of duty.

Then must we not, cost what it may, inviolably fulfil our duty, be guided by a principle of duty, in order to lead an honorable and happy life which shall be crowned by the death of the just?

CHAPTER XXXI.

SINS OF THOUGHT AND WORD.

Si quis in verbo non offendit, hic perfectus est vir (If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man).—JAMES iii. 2.

AVERY simple means of acquiring purity of conscience, which is so precious in the spiritual life, is to watch over our words, that we may utter none which may be criminal or reprehensible before God. We have the testimony of the Holy Spirit that if we do not sin in word we shall not sin at all: *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man* (James. iii. 2).

The expression, *in word*, should extend not only to the exterior expression of thought but also to the thought itself, which is a veritable interior expression of the mind. Moreover, thoughts and words are so intimately united that if one are good the other are equally so. Then to rigorously observe the rule of the Holy Spirit we must endeavor to avoid sins of thought and sins of word.

To this end let us try to well understand one and the other.

I. Sins of thought. We understand by sins of thought not only representations and judgments of the mind, but also desires and affections of the heart contrary to the law of God. They relate either to God, or our neighbor, or ourselves.

1st. Sins against God—doubting the truths of faith; murmuring interiorly against Providence; rebelling against the divine will in trying events, and enduring them with impatience; despairing of one's amendment or salvation; rejoicing in outrages against religion or the church by witnessing impious spectacles, or in any other way. . . .

2d. Sins against our neighbor—suspicions, rash judgment; feelings of envy, of aversion which we sometimes nourish even against our superiors; anger, rancor, hatred, desires of vengeance, evil wishes against our neighbor, malicious pleasure at sight of his misfortunes or his sins, coveting his goods or his position. . . .

3d. Sins against ourselves—feelings of pride or vain complacency; contempt for others; ambitious thoughts and desires, impure imaginings, shameful thoughts and desires. . . .

We must observe here that we sin by these bad thoughts only in as far as we consent to them. *The thought*, says St. Bernard, *cannot injure us as long as we do not consent to it.* But

if it be voluntary it stains the purity of our souls: *Hæc sunt quæ coinquinant hominem* (Matt. xv. 20). Then we must repel them at once without hesitation, and unceasingly watch over our senses and our heart that they may not enter, and avoid idleness and evil conversations, which give rise to evil thoughts.

II. Sins of word. Nothing is easier than to offend in words; therefore the prophet addresses this prayer to God: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips* (Ps. cxl. 3). *Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth* (Ecclus. xxviii. 29).

The Creator has endowed us with the gift of speech to praise His divine Majesty, to confess our sins, to ask of God what we need, to edify our neighbor by communicating to him salutary knowledge, finally that we may sometimes experience in friendly intercourse the agreeable pleasures of honest relaxation. . . .

Now, we offend in words when we fail to use this noble gift for the end for which we have received it, and we sin particularly when we abuse it by uttering useless or culpable words against God, or our neighbor, or ourselves.

Such are:

1st. Words uttered when we should be silent. . . .

2d. Words which are indiscreet, ill-timed, unbecoming. . . .

3d. Blasphemies.

4th. Words ridiculing sacred persons or things, and impious discourses.

5th. Arrogant and vain words.

6th. Lies.

7th. Murmurs and other words contrary to the fourth commandment.

8th. Hard, angry, injurious words, sharp and scoffing words.

9th. Detraction, calumnies, and all words concerning the faults of the absent. . . .

10th. Immodest, indecent words, licentious and obscene songs.

What must we think and say of one who indulges in obscene conversations, and how should we conduct ourselves towards him?

A shameless, immodest speaker dishonors himself and shows that he is an unchaste man, an enemy to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. . . . Let him not urge that the end of his discourse is but to excite laughter, to amuse his companions ; that it is mere badinage. . . . Ah! murderous tongue, thou dost assassinate souls, thou plungest a poniard into innocent hearts, to excite laughter, to amuse thyself. What! thou committest the most abominable mortal sins, thou damnest thy own soul with that of others, which thou plungest into hell as

a jest! Thinkest thou such crimes fitting for laughter? Ah! if thou dost laugh it is with the satanic glee of Satan over his prey.

If it happen that we have the misfortune to meet with one of these shameless, unchaste, obscene tongues what must we do? How must we bear ourselves? Above all beware of taking part in the immodest discourse in any way, either by laughing at what is said or even by listening to it. If no one listened to immodest discourse it would not be uttered. Are you at the head of a family? Suffer no indecent word to be uttered in your house. Would you suffer the presence of a tiger, a serpent, a thief, an assassin? . . . Wherever you encounter it fly from it as from a pestilence or a traitor who would plunge a poniard in your breast. . . .

To avoid sins of words be prudent in the choice of your friends; have no intercourse but with those who respect themselves in their conversations; and remember that your tongue has been twice sanctified—first by the salt of baptism, then by the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. . . .

O Holy Virgin, pure and immaculate Mother! obtain for me the grace to govern my tongue and to be, after thy example, holy and irreproachable in my words.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN.

Iniquitatem odio habui, et abominatus sum (I have hated and abhorred iniquity).—Ps. cxviii. 163.

HATRED for sin, abhorrence of all that is called iniquity, form the basis of true virtue, of the Christian life. By the word iniquity we must understand not only mortal sin but also venial sin; one and the other are an abomination in the eyes of God; one and the other are sovereignly fatal to man and bring upon him the greatest evils. In order to conceive an ever-increasing horror for both let us make a few reflections on mortal sin and venial sin.

I. Mortal sin. If God strikes mortal sin with all His wrath, if He punishes it with the eternal torments of hell, it is because mortal sin in His eyes includes a supreme malice which deserves all the rigor of His justice. God sees this terrible evil as it really is, hence His maledictions, His anathemas, His wrath; man sees it but obscurely, hence his indiffer-

ence, or even his affection for sin. Ah! if he were to see it with God's eyes, by the light of faith, he would conceive a hatred of it which would grow deeper and deeper.

What, then, is mortal sin? What is the state of mortal sin?

1st. Mortal sin is a grave violation of the law of God. By mortal sin man insults his Creator by preferring a creature to Him; he tells Him in actions, if not in words, *I will not serve.*

Such is the monstrous act which is called mortal sin; it is an injury launched against God like an arrow launched against heaven; it is at the same time a fatal blow given by the sinner to himself and which strikes his soul with death. *He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul* (Ps. x. 6).

2d. The act passes, but its effect remains; it leaves the soul wounded, in a state which is called a *state of mortal sin*—a fatal state, in which it remains as long as the sin is unpardoned.

What, then, is a state of mortal sin? It is a state of death, of slavery, of perdition.

A state of death. The soul struck by mortal sin instantly loses that interior life which is called sanctifying grace, and in the eyes of God is but a lifeless corpse, destined to be buried in hell. *The rich man died and was*

buried in hell (Luke xvi. 22). It is without life for heaven, where were it admitted by an exceptional order of Providence it would be unable to see, or taste, or comprehend any of its joys.

In fact, sanctifying grace being the supernatural life which God has given the soul to enable it to live for heaven, deprived of this life it is incapable of enjoying or seeing the eternal light of heaven, as a dead body is of seeing the light of the sun on earth. Moreover, deprived of grace, which is not only its life but the principle of its merits, it becomes sterile like dead wood, and is incapable of producing any work meritorious for heaven. Finally, deprived of beauty, it appears in God's eyes a lifeless corpse. This is why the Saviour called the *Pharisees whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness.* The soul, being but a corpse, must be buried, and buried in the tomb of souls, which is hell. *The rich man died*, says Jesus Christ, and *he was buried in hell* (Luke xvi. 22).

State of slavery. The soul by mortal sin throwing off the yoke of obedience and the service of God falls into the slavery of the devil and her own passions. Formerly God reigned in her; now it is the devil who possesses her as master, who holds her chained, to drag her into hell as soon as death shall permit him. Mean-

while he tyrannizes over her, urges her on from sin to sin, confirms her more and more in her evil habits, estranges her from piety, from prayer, from all religious exercises, for fear she may escape him by a sincere conversion. In sickness particularly he makes every effort to prevent her receiving the sacraments in time, that she may die impenitent and become his prey in hell, where he subjects her to an eternal slavery a thousand times more terrible.

State of perdition. The moment the sinner, trampling the law of God under his feet, dares to say to Him, *I will not serve Thee*, God answers by a decree of eternal punishment. The sinner is then condemned to hell, and if he does not go there at once it is because God grants him a delay to do penance; when this delay expires the sentence of divine Justice is inevitably executed.

The state of this unfortunate soul resembles that of a criminal condemned to death by human justice and shut up in prison until the day fixed for his execution. There is, however, a difference: human justice in this case is inflexible, while God accords pardon to sincere repentance. Moreover, the victim of human justice dreams only of his sad state, while the victim of divine Justice too frequently forgets and abandons himself to mad pleasures.

Man in a state of damnation or mortal sin is like Damocles, who, seated at a royal banquet, believed himself the happiest of mortals, while a sword was suspended by a hair over his head. . . . The sinner in a state of damnation also resembles an unfortunate creature who in a state of intoxication falls asleep upon a railroad track. . . . Finally, he is compared to a tree which the woodmen endeavor to fell with an axe, while others drag it by a rope fastened to its top; the tree will necessarily fall to the side where the rope is.

Such is the terrible state of mortal sin. Suspended over the abyss of hell by the fragile thread of life, liable to fall therein at any moment, what peace can the unfortunate sinner know? *There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord* (Isaias xlviii. 22). Why is it, nevertheless, that we see worldlings rejoicing and vaunting their happiness? Ah! their joy is wholly exterior; it is only an intoxication of the senses. Peace of conscience is unknown to them; they are full of trouble interiorly, or they have succeeded in stifling their remorse, the repose they enjoy is that of the animal which falls asleep in the shambles.

Ah! may they wake from this sleep of death. *Surge, qui dormis, et exsurge a mortuis* (Eph. v. 14). Let us, as Children of Mary, have an ever-increasing horror of mortal sin, that, with the

assistance of our good Mother, we may never fall into this deplorable state.

II. Venial sin. It is not sufficient to fly mortal sin; we must also most carefully avoid venial sins. Why? Because venial sin, as it appears by the light of faith, is not a trifling matter but a very great evil—a great evil in itself, a great evil to us.

1st. Venial sin in itself is not a light fault; if we call it thus it is only in a relative sense and by comparison with mortal sin. Venial sin considered in its malice, and as it appears in the eyes of God, is an evil greater than all the evils of the natural order, so that we must suffer everything rather than commit it. It is an evil so great that not for anything in the world, even to effect the greatest good, should I dream for a moment of committing it

What, then, is venial sin? It is a violation of the divine law which does not destroy sanctifying grace in our souls, but which is no less an injury to God, a work of the devil, a product of hell, a disorder opposed to the divine attributes as darkness is to light, and consequently an abomination in the eyes of God. Hence the saints' horror of venial sin; hence the grief of St. Aloysius fainting at the feet of his confessor.

To better judge of the evil let us consider its chastisements. A curiosity which seemed

very pardonable drew upon Lot's wife a most striking punishment. The Bethsamites were punished, in great numbers, with death for having looked upon the ark. Oza the Levite, for having touched it under circumstances which would seem to excuse the violation of the law, was also struck dead. David, for ordering the census of his people to be taken through a motive of vanity, drew upon Israel the scourge of a pest which carried off seventy thousand men. What shall we say of purgatory, where venial sins shall be still more severely punished in its expiating flames? The fire, says St. Augustine, which purifies the elect in purgatory is like that which tortures the reprobates in hell.

A great evil to us. Venial sin is a leprosy which stains our souls and deprives them of that purity so necessary for Christians. It prevents us from advancing in virtue and enjoying the consolations of the Holy Spirit. It weakens our souls and disposes them to fall into tepidity, and even into the abyss of mortal sin. It merits the severest chastisements which we must undergo in this life or the next.

Since venial sin is so great an evil in the eyes of faith, should I not endeavor to combat it with all my strength? To this end I must avoid all those faults which are called deliberate, which are wittingly and knowingly com-

mitted, and to which we may apply these words of the Holy Spirit: *He that contemneth small things shall fall little by little* (Ecclus. xix. 1.) The most practical and efficacious means of avoiding it is daily examination of conscience and generosity in conquering one's self. *Vince te ipsum*—Conquer thyself.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PREDOMINANT FAULT.

Non pugnabitis nisi contra regem Israel solum (You shall not fight but against the King of Israel).—3 KINGS xxii. 31.

SUCH was the order given by the King of Syria to his soldiers as they were about to attack the army of Achab, King of Israel. Direct all your darts, he said to them, against the king; it is him whom I must conquer. The king was killed, in fact, and all his army dispersed. It is thus we must act against our predominant fault, our predominant passion; we must concentrate all our efforts against it.

He who desires to walk in the path of virtue soon finds a great obstacle in this interior enemy; but if the predominant passion is an obstacle we may also say that a sure means of advancing in virtue is to combat and conquer it.

In war victory depends less upon the number and courage of the soldiers than upon the ability of the commander and his strategy of

war; in like manner the most efficacious means of conquering our vices and our faults is the faithful application of a good method. Now, the best method, that which was followed by all the saints, is to fight our predominant fault, predominant passion, with generosity.

What must we understand by a predominant passion? How must we triumph over it?

I. What is a predominant passion? We understand in general by a predominant passion that one of our evil inclinations which has most empire over us. We bear in our heart the germs of all passions, but usually there is one which rules us and which is the root of all our faults. In one it is anger. He is roused at the least contradiction; if anything displeases him he breaks forth into angry words, injurious epithets, menaces. . . . This would have been the predominant passion of St. Francis of Sales, had he not controlled the vivacity of his temperament; but, thanks to generous efforts and the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, whose devoted servant he was, he controlled this excessive quickness so well that he acquired exemplary meekness and unalterable serenity of soul.

In another it may be pride, which takes a thousand different forms. Sometimes he seeks to be elevated and distinguished above others; he aspires to honors and brilliant employments;

again, if he find himself eclipsed he nourishes in his heart secret enmities and envy, which devour it; if he be forgotten or others preferred to him he grows angry; the least praise inflates and delights him to a degree which excites ridicule as well as compassion. This was the passion of which St. Francis Xavier would have become the victim, if St. Ignatius had not taught him to turn it to a nobler object. Docile to the teachings of his holy friend, he changed his ambition into zeal and became the glorious apostle of the Indies and Japan.

In a third it may be a depth of indolence and sloth which keeps him plunged in a lethargy in which he is capable of nothing, in which he wastes and makes sterile the precious time of his life. Days, weeks pass without his advancing a step—always planning, never executing; always beginning, never achieving.

How many other passions do we not see thus exercising their preponderating influence! It may be an inveterate love of talking; a malice which is continually attacking the reputation of our neighbor; a beginning of sordid avarice which denies a trifling alms to the poor; a puerile vanity because of very ordinary advantages; a propensity to lies; a slothfulness which leads us into everything which flatters the body and the senses. They may all be reduced to two passions, the root of all the others: pride,

which refers everything to self, and sensuality, which seeks to gratify itself in everything, will be inconvenienced in nothing. Whatever the passion which predominates in us, we must know that it is our most mortal enemy, and if we would not become its prey we must fight it unto death. But how shall we know it?

2d. What is each one's predominant passion? Here are the marks by which we may recognize it. Our predominant passion is the most usual source of the sins into which we fall; it is what produces trouble and remorse in our souls; it is the principal matter of our confessions; it is the fault we cherish most and for which we like least to be reproved or corrected; finally, that over which we sigh in the depths of our heart, saying: If I had not this unfortunate propensity I would be a different man; if I could get rid of it all my sins would disappear with it. If these indications are not sufficient ask your confessor; he will tell you the predominant fault which you must combat.

II. How must we combat it? As our most fatal enemy, with energetic ardor. For, mark it well, if—I tremble at the thought—you are so unfortunate as to be eternally lost it will be your predominant passion which shall have caused your perdition. It is the breach in the citadel of your soul; if the citadel be taken it will be through this breach that the devil shall

enter; as also if you close up this breach the citadel will hold out and you are sure of victory and salvation. The predominant fault is the Goliath whom we must overcome; if you conquer it all the Philistines will take flight; if you have not the courage to combat it—that is, if you allow yourself to be governed by your predominant passion—all vices will enter your soul, your sins will be multiplied, your evil habits will be strengthened, you will fall into darkness and indifference: sad consequences, of which the final result will frequently be impenitence and perdition.

Then should we not combat such an enemy? Should we not attack it resolutely, resolve its ruin that it may not be ours, and say with the prophet: *I will pursue after my enemies, and overtake them; and I will not turn again until they are consumed. I will break them, and they shall not be able to stand; they shall fall under my feet?* (Ps. xvii. 38, 39).

A practical means of gaining this triumph is *particular examen*, which consists in daily examining before God how we have struggled against our predominant fault, how many times we have failed, how many times we have conquered; after which we ask pardon of God and we resolve to struggle with new ardor until our next examen. This account daily exacted of ourselves stimulates vigilance and attention;

we are on our guard against the fault we have to combat, we force ourselves to avoid falls, and our efforts are all the more efficacious from being concentrated upon one object alone. If, after the example of the King of Syria who ordered his soldiers to direct all their darts against Achab, King of Israel, you order the powers of your soul to direct all their forces against the king of your vices, you will triumph over it sooner or later, however powerful it appears.

Let us begin this salutary struggle with good courage; let us maintain it with perseverance, not forgetting to invoke with filial confidence the intercession of our Mother, the Blessed Virgin; and, like all the saints, we shall be victorious.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

Qui operatur terram suam, inaltabit acervum frugum (He that tilleth his land shall make a high heap of corn).—ECCLUS. XX. 30.

THE field which each one must cultivate is his own heart, his morals, his conduct towards God and towards men. By this holy culture, by this persevering labor, we correct the most shocking faults, we acquire those beautiful virtues which form a fine character—those virtues, replete with charms, that win for their possessor the respect and love of all. What is there more precious, more desirable, than a fine character? It is one of man's best qualities; it outranks science and hardly yields to virtue, with which, moreover, it is closely united. The Holy Spirit signalizes it in these words: *A man amiable in society shall be more friendly than a brother* (Prov. xviii. 24). This man so amiable, so attractive is one whose fine character wins all hearts. He is loved by God and men, useful to society, happy himself, and making others happy.

Rarely is a fine character a pure gift of na-

ture or grace; usually it requires, like science, the concurrence of labor and practice; but by means of a generous co-operation every man can form for himself a fine character.

Therefore we may say that formation of character is an essential part in Christian education, and for him who aspires to perfection an object which requires all his care.

That we may successfully undertake it let us try to comprehend all that relates to this interesting question: I. What we must properly understand by character; II. What is the origin of character and how we must form it.

I. What must we understand by character? A person's character is his manner of conduct, or rather it is a propensity, an habitual disposition, which impels him to conduct himself after a certain manner. Each one has his character, as each one has his face. Character is a man's moral physiognomy; it is no less distinct among men than the features of the face. And just as a face may be beautiful or repulsive, so a character is susceptible of deformity or beauty; it is the difference of good or bad character.

A fine character manifests itself by a manner of conduct which is not only irreproachable, but also full of that sweetness and moderation which wins the affection of every one. It results from a collection of several virtues which

sustain one another and make their influence more or less felt as circumstances call them forth. These virtues are integrity, honesty, courage, moderation, and a great love for mankind.

Integrity, which renders a man incapable of doing anything contrary to his honor or conscience, must be the foundation of a fine character.

Then honesty renders him incapable of deceiving any one. This honesty of which we speak is never either indiscreet, offensive, or rude; it is regulated by a delicate sentiment of fitness and enhanced by the forms of good breeding.

To honesty we must add courage and a noble independence which controls all vain timidity, which tramples under foot all that savors of the baseness of human respect. It is a noble sentiment which raises man above all weaknesses and makes him incapable of blushing for anything save a fault against honor or virtue.

In action this noble courage becomes energy. It deliberates with prudence before every undertaking; but once the enterprise has been prudently conceived and wisely planned it pursues its execution with an indomitable strength and a perseverance which cannot fail of success.

Moderation and calm. To energy a perfect character joins an imperturbable calm. In

vain is it resisted, outraged, attacked by bitter words; so far from being carried away by anger, it does not even appear moved, and its moderation is a contrast to the violence of its enemies. To passion it opposes only reason, and at need an unalterable patience. Hence that evenness of temper, that amiable gentleness towards everybody, that affability which wins all hearts.

Finally, that which completes a fine character is love for his fellow-men. Nothing is nobler than a heart animated by this love, this universal benevolence; it loves all the world, even its enemies; it is compassionate of the afflictions of men and despises no one; even the most revolting vices excite in it more grief than indignation or contempt. Hence its respect and kindness to all, rich and poor, without exception; hence that benevolence, that generosity which is carried to abnegation, to forgetfulness and sacrifice of itself; hence that consideration, that complacency which refuses nothing, which lends itself to all the desires of others, ever yielding, *stopping only at the altar*, as St. Francis of Sales says—that is, when God and conscience interfere; hence that friendly condescension which bends and accommodates itself to all, weeping with those who weep, rejoicing with those who rejoice.

Such is the beautiful collection of virtues

which constitute a fine character and give it so many charms. But we understand that in this collection of virtues there must be some which predominate, which determine the character and give it an individual tone. Thus there are calm and moderate characters, gentle and conciliating characters, compassionate and generous characters, constant and energetic characters. When a character is distinguished by firmness and by that noble independence which knows no fear when there is question of a duty to be performed, it is a character *par excellence*, and those who are endowed with it are called *men of character.*

Need we say that the noble character we have just been tracing is the counterpart of an evil character? The latter results from a collection of vicious qualities, or at least from some vice predominating and corrupting the virtues which may exist with it. Sometimes it is anger which one allows to govern him, or pride and ambition, or indolence and sloth, which degenerate into impurity ; or, again, avarice, cupidity, and interest. Hence we distinguish choleric and violent characters, vain and ambitious characters, effeminate and sensual characters, avaricious and interested characters, false and deceitful characters; and we may say there are as many evil characters as there are predominating vices.

The foundation of every evil character is selfishness. Study one, see the principle through which he acts; it is not conscience, nor duty, nor a true love for his fellow-men, but love of himself, of his own interest, or any passion which, without his knowledge perhaps, exercises an imperious influence over him. Not that his conduct is always evil, or that he is not at times capable of a good action, but these good moments are fleeting, like the good humor upon which they depend or the interest which is at stake.

The faults we have just indicated must be avoided with the greatest care; the least of them mar the beauty of a fine character and weaken its charms.

II. Origin and formation of character. How does a good character originate? Is it given us by nature? Is it the work of grace, or must we acquire it by our own efforts?

Now, we may say that nature and grace powerfully concur in its formation, but in reality it is we ourselves who must form it by our personal co-operation.

To thoroughly understand the necessity of this co-operation on our part, observe that we distinguish natural character and acquired character.

We understand by natural character each one's natural propensity, which we call his

good or bad nature. Every man is born with a germ of virtue and vice—a germ which develops into good or evil according as we cultivate it or neglect its cultivation. Our character, then, as nature gives it to us, is properly neither good nor bad; at the same time we say a nature is good when it is, like good ground, easily cultivated, and a nature is bad when it resists cultivation. Never, however, is this moral soil so bad that it may not be softened and improved by earnest labor joined to the assistance of divine grace.

We call an acquired character that which each one forms to himself by co-operating or neglecting to co-operate with grace. To acquire a truly good character we must be convinced that labor is as indispensable for this end as the cultivation of the earth is for the obtaining of the harvest. To possess a bad character, on the contrary, it is sufficient to neglect one's self, to yield to one's propensities; faults not corrected will grow like weeds in neglected ground.

This indispensable labor is called forming the character—a work which we must examine in a practical manner.

How must the formation of a character be effected?

Above all it is necessary to will and efficaciously resolve to apply one's self to the labor it

involves. And why should we not have this resolution when we consider the grave fact that without this work of formation a good character is not possible, and without a good character there is no success nor happiness in life? A man of evil character, disagreeable humor, although he may have the most brilliant talents, the finest qualities, will excite contempt, antipathy, and opposition. Follow him through life and its affairs; you will see that he irritates everybody, that he alienates the most favorably disposed minds, and consequently fails in all his enterprises, spoils all he undertakes. A conciliating and moderate man, on the contrary, a man of good character, is pleasing to God and to his fellow-men, useful to himself and to others; he wins the confidence of all, he calms passions, he dexterously manages minds and conducts the most delicate affairs with success. What is more precious than such a character? Ought we not labor to acquire it by a good formation?

Now, formation of character consists in correcting one's faults, of anger, of hardness and ill-temper, of pride, of sensitiveness and indolence. Four means concur in this correction: the reproofs of our parents and our superiors—reproofs which must be taken in good part and with docility, even though they be accompanied with salutary chastisement; daily examination of conscience, especially particular ex-

amen, with which we combat our predominant fault; generosity in overcoming ourselves, taking for our motto, *Vince te ipsum*—Conquer thyself; piety, by which we obtain assistance from on high, without which our efforts would remain sterile.

By employing these means, whatever your faults, you will triumph over them sufficiently to form to yourself a truly good character, in which you will possess a sure pledge of the happiest and most honorable life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SPIRIT OF ORDER AND LABOR.

Me oportet operari opera ejus, qui misit me, donec dies est (I must work the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day).—JOHN ix. 4.

ONE of the most indispensable virtues, because it most contributes to the solidity of all the others, is Christian industry, a spirit of labor, to which is attached a spirit of order and regularity. Let us give a short explanation of one and the other.

I. A spirit of labor. Why must we love labor, and how must we love labor?

1st. We must love labor for two reasons—because God wills it and because labor has precious fruits.

Necessity of labor. Labor is a universal law to which God subjects all His creatures. Has He not created all beings with wants and with imperfections? Now, after having created them thus He was satisfied to furnish them means which would enable them to provide for their wants themselves and to acquire the perfection suitable to them. This providential disposition

reveals the intentions of the Creator: He evidently wishes that His creatures should exercise their faculties by employing the means He gives them to attain the end for which He has created them; it is this exercise which constitutes labor.

Look at the animals; they have need of food and shelter. Hence their continual movement, their activity, their industry, their labor, either in search of food, or to defend themselves from their enemies, or to find shelter for their young. . . .

Even plants and all vegetable nature is in continual action, as if subject to the law of labor to develop and produce fruit. . . .

And is not man obliged to obtain everything through labor? Yes, everything, absolutely everything, that is necessary and useful to him: food, habitation, clothes, and particularly knowledge and virtue, are at this price. Hence the well-known adage, *Nihil sine labore*—Nothing without labor. This state of things is the result not only of the general law of labor, but also of a positive decree uttered by divine Justice against guilty man. After the sin of our first parents God said to Adam: *The earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread* (Gen. iii. 18, 19).

But you will say there are men born in opu-

lence who possess an abundance of all things; have they need to labor? They also are subject to the law of labor.

First, is it not evident that the rich no less than the poor at their birth are without knowledge and virtue? Therefore they must acquire them by labor and by serious and sustained efforts; without this mental and moral labor they will be, even with the most brilliant exterior, but ignorant, vicious men, meriting the name of gilded nothings, whited sepulchres. . . .

As to manual and corporal labor, it is true that for many it is not an obligation; but does that mean that they can abandon themselves to slothful idleness? Idleness is a vice in any one; and all are condemned to labor, either corporal or mental.

Thus the rich, like all men on earth, have a task to fulfil: they must employ their leisure and their faculties for the common good by taking part in the public administration, or in any other way as circumstances require. Woe to those rich sluggards who do nothing but enjoy their fortune, or who even abuse the temporal gifts they have received from God, using them to offend their Supreme Benefactor and to injure their fellow-beings!

Then labor is necessary and of obligation for all.

Fruits of labor. It is said with truth that labor is a treasure; it is, in fact, a source of blessings to soul and body.

It preserves us from all the evils of idleness and inactivity. Idleness is not only the mother of ignorance, but also of misery and nearly all vices. It is called with reason stagnant water, uncultivated land, the devil's pillow. . . . Now, a spirit of labor, by keeping us from idleness, preserves us from the fatal effects of this vice; it is for this reason that the saints recommend a spirit of labor as a safeguard of virtue: *Let the devil find you always occupied*, says St. Jerome.

It frees us from melancholy and ennui, which never fail to accompany inactivity. . . .

The natural fruit of labor is success either in studies or all other things. What does not the laborious cultivation of the earth effect, even when the ground is unfertile? What fine results are produced, what services rendered by men who by their labor make good use of the talent, even mediocre talent, which they have received from Providence! This saying of one of the ancients is true in every sense of the word: *Labor omnia vincit improbus* (Virg., Georg. I. 145)—Everything yields to persevering labor.

A spirit of labor, finally, makes us utilize all the moments of a precious time and lay up treasures of merit for heaven.

Manner of laboring. How must we labor? With an upright and Christian intention, for God, and to accomplish our duty. We cannot, then, consider whether the labor which comes to us is agreeable, but whether it is God's will and constitutes a duty.

The subject or matter of labor may vary. We distinguish three kinds of subjects, which we call the labor of duty or obligation, useful labor, pleasurable labor. The last consists of innocent amusement, pastime, any honest occupation suitable to relax the mind.

In regard to amusing occupations, we must beware of indulging in them at the expense of our duties; we must make but a moderate use of them, in order not to lose in them a precious time of which we will each have to render an account to God. To avoid this shoal we have but one rule to follow—a rule as simple as it is just: *The necessary before the useful, the useful before the agreeable.*

We must labor patiently and faithfully in union with the labor of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph. . . . Let us add we must have order in our labor.

II. Order. To succeed in labor, to labor with facility, and even with the greatest possible speed, we must proceed with order. What is order? And how must we apply it to labor?

Order in general consists of a just and suit-

able disposition of things, as may be seen in the works of nature, in the human body, in a library, in a lexicon, in a musical instrument. . . . Many things afford a striking example of order and harmony. Disorder, on the contrary, is confusion, tumult, destruction, as we see in physical and moral disturbances, such as tempests, inundations, revolutions, wars. . . .

Order, being based on truth, becomes in its turn a principle of the good and the beautiful. . . .

Order comes from God and it leads to God. God, being supreme truth, imprints upon all His works His divine seal—the order and beauty which meet our eyes everywhere: *He disposes all things in measure, and number, and weight* (Wis. xi. 21). To convince ourselves of this we need only consider the heavens, their structure, their admirable movements; . . . or the Church founded by Christ, her hierarchy, and her march through ages; all therein is order, regularity, subordination, like an army ranged for battle. Order comes from God, and whoever loves order draws near to God: *If there be order in your life*, says St. Augustine, *order will lead you to God.*

Order is the principle of beauty, of strength, of prosperity. What is more beautiful than a well-constructed edifice, than a harmonious concert? And is not order the principle of this

beauty? What is stronger than an army? But is not order also the principle of its strength? . . . Look at a prosperous country where commerce, agriculture, the arts flourish; whence is its prosperity, if not from the order produced there by the wisdom of its laws and its government? Would you succeed in your particular enterprises and in your different labors? Work with order and method; then you will omit nothing of what you have to do; you will accomplish much more; you will be happier; you will practise naturally, as it were, the precious virtue of Christian mortification. . . . If, on the contrary, you are lacking in order you will easily fall into a habit of acting through caprice, through humor, and even through passion; you will forget, you will neglect many things; hence losses, failures, and then regrets, vexations, and a thousand anxieties. . . .

How must we apply order to labor and to a life of labor? We must do so by means of a rule or order of life. We understand by this a plan, a sort of list, in which we mark the principal duties we have to perform and determine a time for them, according to the particular position in which we are placed. In this plan must be prominently marked an hour for rising and retiring, evening and morning prayer, spiritual reading, and the regular reception of the sacraments. Then the different exterior duties, la-

bors, works of charity, even amusements, should have their place assigned them.

As to each one's special work, in order to carry it on with order and success we must apply ourselves to it with our whole heart, study it, if necessary, in order to thoroughly understand it, and then pursue it perseveringly. It is rare that persevering labor is not crowned with success.

Such is the spirit of order and labor, so valuable both to civil and Christian life. Let us devote ourselves to acquiring it by generous efforts; and let us ask the Blessed Virgin to help us by her powerful intercession.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CAREER AND VOCATION.

Vias tuas, Domine, demonstra mihi, et semitas tuas edoce me (Show, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths).—Ps. xxiv. 4.

THE term of human education, the crowning finish of youth, is entering upon a career, the career which it is to follow during life. This career may be happy and noble; but it may also, and in fact too frequently is, filled with dishonor and bitter sorrows.

This very grave difference depends particularly on what is called one's choice of a state in life. If you make a good choice you assure yourself a happy and honorable career; if you make a bad choice you enter upon a way of misery and dishonor.

Now, to make a good choice it is absolutely necessary to embrace the state to which God calls us; in other words, we must follow our vocation. To thoroughly understand this, and that we may be wisely directed in so grave a matter, let us examine, first, the true idea of

vocation; second, the manner of faithfully following one's vocation.

I. True idea of vocation. We understand by vocation the career, state of life, the proper place destined by Providence for every man here below. It is named *vocation*—that is, *calling*, because God calls each man, as if by his name, to assign him a place in this world. Governing the universe with infinite and wholly paternal wisdom, God sees the different states, the different degrees, the diverse places in human society, and He creates to fill them men to whom He gives qualities and graces fitted to that end; so that each one, in the designs of Providence, is destined for a state which constitutes his vocation.* God acts like a father of a family, who assigns to each of his servants and each of his children the labor, the employment which he knows is proportioned to their strength or ability; He acts like a skilful gardener, who places each plant, each tree in the earth which he knows is suited to it; like a builder, who shapes each stone according to its destination; like a watchmaker, who adjusts each wheel to the place in which it is to work.

In like manner acts Providence. He destines each one for a state, a *vocation;* so that voca-

*We speak here of universal Providence, without reference to the particular question whether God leaves certain persons the choice between several states wherein they may serve Him with equal perfection.

tion depends properly, not on ourselves nor on the arbitrary choice of our parents, but upon the counsels of God.

The states to which one may be called are numerous. Taken in a moral and religious sense —that is, in view of the organized Christian society—there are three: the secular state, or common life, the ecclesiastical state, and the religious state. The first is founded on the observance of the commandments, the second on the divine prerogatives of the priesthood and clerical obligations, the third on the observance of the evangelical counsels.

These states are but three varieties of the Christian life, three ways of living Christianly, three ways by which we may and should attain salvation by following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Thus we may call these states, the first, the Christian life in the world; the second, the Christian life in the priesthood; the third, the Christian life in the cloister. You will say, perhaps, that these states are much more numerous, that magistrates, doctors, lawyers, soldiers, artisans, merchants form so many different states. No; these are only professions, occupations, or distinct social positions, and not states properly speaking. We only give that name to the states which form part of the social organization established by our Saviour, and which impose essentially different obligations.

These three states, having been equally established by God, are all three good in themselves, all three necessary, but not all three equal in dignity. Thus the different members, the diverse organs of the human body—the hands, the feet, the eyes—are equally noble, equally necessary to man; so the different materials—wood, marble, metals—which God has created for the wants of man are necessary, though some are more valuable than others.

At the same time, if these states constitute different degrees, it does not follow that individuals occupying the highest will have more merit before God, because their merit shall depend particularly on the perfection with which each shall fulfil the duties of his state. Thus on the stage the merit of the actors depends less upon the rôle they play than upon the manner in which each one performs his rôle. Again, also, a subject sculptured in wood may have more merit than one done in marble, ivory, or gold. . . .

If we consider the states relatively—that is, as they relate to man, who must fulfil them—the best for each one is evidently that to which he is called, for the reason that it is the state which is suited to him, which is made for him, for which he himself is made, and for which God has given him proportionate talents and graces. The holiest state, then, is not the best

for all, any more than the most valuable material is best for all workmen. For example, for one who works in wood the best material, that with which he will work best, is wood; for the sculptor, marble, as gold for the goldsmith.

What we have just said makes it already evident that each one must embrace the state to which God calls him; in other words, that each one must follow his vocation. But here is a principle of conduct so important that it behooves us to separately consider the motives for it, that we may thoroughly understand its importance.

Motives for following one's vocation. The man who follows his vocation, who is in his vocation, is in his place; there only is he happy, there only is he successful, there only does he work out his salvation.

There only is he happy. Yes, in his vocation he is happy, he is contented, he is at ease. Why? Because he is in his place. Thus the members of a body are at ease, each in its place; so also the little birds are happy in the wood, fishes in the sea, sheep in the field, because they are in their place, their element. Man finds himself similarly happy, however humble his condition, provided he is in the position God destined for him, provided he is following his vocation.

Outside his vocation, however high the posi-

tion may be, he is out of place, and for that reason ill at ease and unhappy. The man who has missed his vocation is like a member out of joint, like a being out of its element. He is a traveller pursuing a false route, painfully toiling in a path outside the beaten road to his country. Let us consider, for example, the state of holy orders. It is the holiest and happiest of states; but enter it without vocation and you will be unhappy, because you are not called to it and because you should have remained in the world. On the contrary, if God call you to the priesthood or the cloister, and you remain in the world to there enjoy more happiness, know that instead of happiness you will find only grief and trouble; you will be restless and unhappy, because your place was the sanctuary. See, on the other hand, those poor religious in their cells, those priests in their parishes, those fathers of families in their homes and their business—they are happy and contented. Why? Because they are in their place, they are in their vocation. It is here, then, in our vocation, that we are happy.

It is there also that one meets with success. Who does not like to succeed in his career? It is very hard to see all that we attempt turn out badly, to fail in all that we undertake, as if a curse were upon us. What is frequently the cause? It is that we are not called to the labor

we undertake. God has not made us for it; He has not given us the requisite qualities for it, nor does He bless us in it. These are the causes of failure and sterility. On the contrary, when we are in our place, when we are employed in the work for which we were made, we have all that is needed to succeed—talent, taste, the blessing of God. Then we labor with facility, with happiness, with success and fruit. Man in his vocation is like a tree planted in soil which suits it; we see it covered with abundant fruits. Then it is in his vocation that man finds success.

Finally, it is there that he attains his salvation. We do not say that outside his vocation it is impossible to save his soul, but if he may save it it is with a great deal more trouble and much less merit.* The reason is that he finds himself in a state for which he has received neither talents nor graces, consequently he finds himself face to face with obligations, obstacles, and dangers disproportioned to his means and his strength. On the contrary, the man who is in his vocation finds himself equal to his duties, because God has proportioned his strength to them. If he encounter enemies he is armed to conquer them; if he encounter obstacles he is

* There are cases where it is morally impossible for a man to save his soul unless he embrace a certain state. Such a man is strictly obliged to enter this state, it being his only means of salvation.

strong to conquer them; if he encounter evil he knows how to turn it to good. He profits by everything, he sanctifies everything, and his career becomes like the way of the just, *which as a shining light goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day* (Prov. iv. 18).

Manner of following one's vocation. Three things are necessary to follow one's vocation well—we must make ourselves worthy of it, we must know it, we must, finally, efficaciously correspond to it.

We must render ourselves worthy of it by remaining faithful to God and by cultivating all the qualities of mind and heart which we have received from Him; in other words, by cultivating knowledge and virtue. There are some who lose their vocation by their slothfulness or by the vices to which they abandon themselves. For example, a young man is one day destined for something great; he has corrupted his mind and his heart, and rendered himself incapable of fulfilling the place for which God destined him—he has lost his vocation. Instead of dissipating this treasure he should have carefully preserved it and by his life made himself worthy of God's designs for him.

To be able to follow our vocation we must know it. Since it is God who gives vocations, it is He also who knows them and who must make each one's known to him. If He spoke

exteriorly to His creatures to designate to each one his place it would be a very simple matter, but usually God does not act in this way. He speaks, but when the creature appeals to Him; He speaks, but by certain signs which man must examine with attention and prudence. Now, to practically fulfil these conditions three things are required on our part: prayer, purity of intention, and counsel. We must daily pray and ask of God the grace to know our vocation. Purity of heart is necessary, in order that the light of the Holy Spirit may penetrate our hearts and make us see the path which we should follow. Counsel is indispensable in so grave a matter; we must ask it of a wise director and follow his advice with docility. This is the way in which we will obtain a knowledge of our vocation.

We must correspond to it efficaciously—that is, promptly, with courage and perseverance.

Promptly. When the will of God is sufficiently known we must make a decision; indecision is as fatal as precipitation. Once the decision is made we must think of executing it, which we should do with prudence, but without any unnecessary delay. It is God who calls us; we must go to Him without delay.

With courage. It rarely happens that there are not obstacles, particularly when there is question of leaving the world; we must over-

come these obstacles with the courage of which St. Aloysius has given such a beautiful example to all youth. It is then we must say with the apostles: *I must obey God rather than men.*

With perseverance. We must never pause until we are freed from all ties and find ourselves in the desired state. But the correspondence which the grace of our vocation demands must not stop here. When man is fixed in the state to which God calls him it remains for him to fulfil the designs of God by faithfully performing all the duties which this state imposes. This is what is called honoring and sanctifying one's state, completely fulfilling one's vocation. By so doing we reach heaven by an easy and happy road, we assure ourselves a holy death and a glorious eternity.

Ask, dear Children of Mary, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, your Mother, the double grace to know your vocation and to faithfully correspond with it until death.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TRUE HAPPINESS.

Beatus vir qui timet Dominum (Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord).—Ps. cxi.

HOUGH all men desire and seek happiness, we see, nevertheless, that very few are happy; and even the small number who appear so, experience so much trouble that we may ask with reason whether there be any real happiness on earth.

Well, yes, there is happiness on earth—true happiness. We say true happiness, and not perfect happiness exempt from all trouble; freedom from trouble and misery is only to be found in paradise, where all tears shall be dried. At the same time in this valley of tears the heart of man may experience a content which satisfies all his lawful desires, and which gives him, if not perfect happiness, at least real happiness. Such was that which the holy Simeon experienced when, holding the infant Messias in his arms, he cried out that his desires were fulfilled, that nothing more remained for him to desire on earth. It is of this happiness which David

speaks when he says: *Who is the man that desireth life: who loveth to see good days?* (Ps. xxxiii. 13). And are not they happy who say with the apostle: We live having nothing, and possessing all things?

Then there are contented hearts, there is true happiness on earth. But what is this happiness? Where is it to be found? What are the blessings it procures? They are not exterior blessings, riches, pleasures, worldly honors, but interior blessings hidden in the service of God.

I. Happiness does not consist in exterior blessings, for they cannot give that contentment to the heart which alone makes us truly happy.

Then they do not consist in riches. The majority persuade themselves that had they the fortune they desire nothing would be wanting to their happiness; but they feed themselves with a vain illusion. Had you the fortune you desire, know that it would no longer suffice you; you would want still more. And even were you to limit your desires and content yourself with the fortune acquired, would you not have to preserve it, to administer it, to make use of it? Now, in all this you would find anxieties and cares which would harass you like so many thorns and destroy your happiness. Let us go further: even though you were to find in it what your heart desired, how long would this

happiness last? Must you not die soon and leave all these possessions? Ah! the rich die as well as the poor, and bitter is their death. *O death!* says the Holy Spirit, *how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions* (Ecclus. xli. 1). If the remembrance is so bitter what shall the reality be? The man who is attached to his riches separates himself from God and follows the path of the wicked rich man of the Gospel: *The rich man died also, and he was buried in hell* (Luke xvi. 22).

If happiness does not consist in riches neither is it to be found in pleasures. Look at those men who gather all the flowers of life, who refuse nothing to their eyes, to their taste, to the appetites of their senses; who run from feast to feast, from amusement to amusement. They are thought happy, and they are called the fortunate ones of the world; are they in reality? Ah! so little are they that, sighing under the weight of their ennui, they find life frequently a burden. Deceived by the illusions of the senses and passion, they believe they are seeking supreme happiness; but when they have attained the phantom of their pursuit the illusion vanishes, their intoxication disappears, and there only remain to them emptiness, deception, and remorse. They vainly run in pursuit of other objects; they find only new de-

ceptions. It is true that, soon disgusted and wearied, they desire to leave this abominable way, but passion retains them—passion which tyrannizes over them, which, like a devouring fire, continually demands new food and is never satisfied..

Ah! yes; at the bottom of this cup of pleasures are bitter dregs and a fatal poison, which, destroying peace of heart and true joy, leave man in an overwhelming void, or even cast him into despair.

What is the fate of the voluptuaries of the world but that of the prodigal of the Gospel? This misguided young man, wishing to be satiated with the torrent of all sensual pleasures, left his father's house and went into a distant country, where he gave himself up to the most shameful life. But having soon squandered all his means, he was reduced to taking service with a master who charged him with the keeping of a herd of swine. This was not all: dying of hunger in this hard service, he would fain have shared the husks of the swine, but even these were denied him. . . .

What misery, what degradation! One of the ancients vividly represents this degrading state by the fiction of Circe and the enchanted cup. This cup, he said, contained a fatal poison which produced strange effects. Those who drank of it soon changed form: their

mouths lengthened like the muzzle of an animal, they walked on all-fours like quadrupeds, and eat only herbs and grass. Thus pleasures, instead of making men happy, only brutalize them.

Is not happiness to be found in honors and human grandeurs? Ah! when was the thirst of ambition ever satiated? Ambition, like avarice, like sensuality, never says, Enough. Besides, a man racked by this passion knows no rest; one time he is threatened by rivalries, another time consumed by jealousies or confounded by humiliations. For whoever exalteth himself shall be humbled—frequently during this life, for ever humbled by death, which breaks all human grandeur as if it were a fragile vase. Therefore glory and honors no more than pleasures and riches can make the happiness of the human heart.

Hear the testimony of a king who had enjoyed all this world can give. He attests that in it all he found but emptiness and vanity: *Vanity of vanities*, says Solomon—*vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. I was king over Israel in Jerusalem; I have become great, and have gone beyond all in wisdom that were before me in Jerusalem; I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; and whatsoever my eyes desired I refused them not, and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every*

pleasure, and I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind (Eccles. i. 2, 12, 16; ii. 8, 9, 10, 11). All, then, is vanity for man here below, except the service of God. *Fear God*, says the wise man, *and keep his commandments, for this is all man* (Eccles. xii. 13).

Then man's happiness in this life is not to be found in exterior blessings.

That which constitutes our happiness is the blessings of the heart which we find in God and His service. *O Israel*, says the Lord by the mouth of the prophet, *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves of the sea* (Isaias xlviii. 18). Thus the Holy Spirit unceasingly tells us: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments* (Ps. cxi. 1).

What are the blessings of the heart which constitute the happiness of the just?

1st. The peace of a good conscience. When conscience makes no reproach, when the Holy Spirit within us gives us the sweet testimony that we are the children of God, we experience a contentment the delight of which all the riches of the world could not give. Thus it has been truly said that contentment was better than riches, and Scripture declares that a *tranquil heart is a perpetual feast.* The just who enjoy it may raise their eyes with confidence to

heaven; they behold there a Father who loves them and protects them, and not a judge who threatens them. They may look forward to the future, for it contains the sweet hope of heaven and not the abyss of despair. When they retire to rest they can sleep tranquilly without the fear of dying and awakening in hell; and in their journeys the thought of accidents need not move them, for they are always ready to appear before God. Yes, as the author of the *Imitation* says, if there be happiness on earth it is the portion of the pure heart. Such is the first principle of true happiness—a good conscience.

2d. The second principle of happiness is benevolence. *Blessed are the merciful*, says the Saviour—that is, those who practise charity and benevolence towards their neighbor—*blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy* from God. The mercy which God promises them is not only their salvation in the next life, but also a reward in this present life. Benevolence is at once rewarded by an interior satisfaction, the sweetness of which is known only to charitable souls, and which surpasses all the pleasures of avarice and sensual egotism. Ah! what happiness they are deprived of who, having the means of exercising benevolence, think not of doing so. . . .

3d. A third principle of happiness is humility.

Just as pride and ambition trouble souls, so humility procures them calm and repose. *Learn of me*, says the Saviour, *because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29); and the author of the *Imitation* develops this promise in these beautiful words: *The humble man God protects and delivers; the humble He loves and comforts; to the humble He inclines Himself; to the humble He gives grace, and after he has been depressed raises him to glory. To the humble He reveals His secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to Himself. The humble man, having received no reproach, maintains himself well enough in peace, because he is fixed upon God and not on the world* (book ii. chapter ii.)

4th. A fourth principle of happiness is accomplished duty. He who puts his pleasure or interest before duty will not be happy, for he will fall into all kinds of faults, with which he will be reproached by God, by men, and by his own conscience. Nothing, on the contrary, is sweeter and at the same time more honorable than to hear from the lips of men, or at last from God: *You have done your duty.* Now, whoever takes this noble stand and sees in the world only his duty, to which all other things are subordinate; whoever knows no other principle but that of fulfilling his duty, and undeviatingly follows this rule of conduct, as simple as it is enlightened, will hear from men, or at

least in the depth of his heart from God: *You have done your duty, and it is well,* according to the word of God in Isaias: *Say to the just man that it is well* (Isaias iii. 10).

5th. A fifth principle of happiness is suffering borne for Jesus Christ. To say that suffering gives happiness seems contrary to truth; thus we see that men fly from suffering as an evil, and call those unhappy who suffer. Nevertheless, it is a truth which the Eternal Wisdom proclaims and which experience confirms: man is happy when he accepts suffering for love of Jesus Christ. *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake,* says the Saviour; *blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.* By the word persecution we must understand all the trials, labors, and tribulations which we encounter in the path of virtue. Borne for Jesus Christ and in union with His sufferings, trials fill Christian souls with marvellous joy: *I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation* (2 Cor. vii. 4). Thus the evils of this life become for the just a principle of joy; their bitterness is changed into sweetness. Then what evil can reach them? Have they not found a paradise upon earth? Yes, says the author of the *Imitation, when thou shalt arrive thus far that tribulation becomes sweet and*

savory to thee for the love of Christ, then think it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth (book ii. 12).

Behold the blessings contained in the service of God, and which constitute true happiness here below—happiness all the more precious that nothing can rob us of it, and that it is the prelude of perfect happiness, of the beatitude which awaits us in the next life.

May we, truly penetrated with this truth, seek happiness only at the real source; we shall thus escape a thousand delusions and all the bitter disappointments of vanity, and we shall see the words of the Holy Spirit verified in us: *Blessed is the man who fears the Lord.*

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FAITH.

Justus ex fide vivit (The just man liveth by faith).—Rom i. 17.

THE just man, who is no other than the true Christian, is presented to us as the tree of benediction planted by the hand of the Lord: *The just shall flourish like the palm-tree planted in the house of the Lord*, says the Psalmist; *he shall grow up like the cedars of Libanus; planted in the house of the Lord, he shall flourish in the courts of the house of God* (xci. 13, 14). Now, just as every tree lives by the root, so the just man lives by faith, which is his vital principle. The holy Council of Trent expressly declares it in these words: *Faith is the beginning of the salvation of men, the foundation and root of all justification* (sess. 6, chap. viii.)

This consideration sufficiently shows us the necessity, the excellence of faith, and its influence upon all Christian life. For the sounder and stronger the root the more vigorous and fruitful the tree.

We have the happiness of possessing faith; but is our faith perfect? Does it leave nothing

to be desired? Do we not merit the reproach our Saviour so frequently addressed the apostles: *O ye of little faith?*

To renew and strengthen this salutary virtue more and more in us let us consider what faith is and what its qualities should be.

Faith. We know that the virtue of faith is a gift of God and a light by which we firmly believe, because of God's supreme truth, all that has been divinely revealed and held as revelation by the Church.

Faith is, then, an interior light which God has given us to learn what we absolutely need to know—our true position upon earth.

Placed in this world for a time only, should not man be eager to know what he is to do here, whence he came, whither he is going, what destiny God holds for him after death, and how he must prepare himself for this destiny? These great questions our reason is powerless to solve; we need the light of faith, the teaching of God.

For observe that the light of faith comes from God; faith is believing what God has said and taught. God deigned to instruct men Himself; He instructed us by word of mouth, as a father does his children, and His divine words have been preserved—not one fell to the ground; they have been transmitted to us by the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church divinely

instituted to be the infallible guardian of God's word.

Yes, God has spoken to the human race. And have men listened to His word? The divine word, which is also called the Gospel, announced to all peoples of the earth, has been received by some and despised by others. Among the number of those who received it are the ancient Gauls, to whom holy missionaries like Martin, Armand, Lieven came to preach the faith in the sixth and seventh century. Our fathers believed with all their hearts, and they have left us with the doctrine of salvation the most beautiful monuments of their faith in these monasteries founded throughout all countries, and in those ancient churches the magnificence of which attests the piety of their founders.

Yes, we frequent the temples where our fathers prayed, but do we really pray there, do we frequently approach the sacraments, do we hear the word of God with the same faith? Alas! the faith of the majority is so weak in our day. Those who still come sometimes to listen to the divine word, when they hear sermons upon sin, judgment, the Passion of Jesus Christ, the eternal happiness of the just, the perdition of the wicked, the endlessness of eternity, they regard these subjects, if not as problems, at least as events so remote that

they make little or no impression upon their soul.

Is this, then, the lively and active faith of our fathers? Is it even a solid and serious faith? Is it the faith of a true Christian? What, then, should our faith be?

Qualities of faith. Our faith, to be such as God wishes it, must be firm, lively, and efficacious.

Our faith must be *firm*—that is, immovable, excluding all shadow of doubt and giving us the same certainty that we have of those evident truths which are the first lights of our reason. Whence is this absolute certainty of our faith? It results from the foundation upon which our faith rests, which is no other than Supreme Truth, God, who speaks to us and who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Not so with men: they can be deceived, and we must accept their testimony only when we are very sure they speak the truth. But God, being the essence of truth, cannot be deceived, cannot err; His testimony is ever infallible. Then ought we not believe it with absolute certainty?

What! we believe what is related by men worthy of credit, and we will doubt the testimony of God? Were a missionary of known integrity to return from Palestine, where he visited Jerusalem and all the holy places, and

say to you: I saw with my own eyes the city which Jesus traversed bearing His cross, the Calvary where He died for our salvation, the sepulchre whence He rose on the third day, would you not believe him? You would believe him, because he spoke of what he saw and he was a man worthy of credit. And Jesus Christ, the true Son of God—has He not seen what He tells us? Have we not His word in the Gospel, do we not receive it from the Church as if from His own lips? He tells us of heaven, of hell, of all the mysteries of religion, and there are men who refuse to believe because they themselves have not seen. Ah! soon they will see and believe, but, alas! like *the devils who believe and tremble* (James ii. 19). Ah! Lord, we believe Thy divine word, we believe without having seen; we believe, but increase our faith, give us a lively, firm faith.

Vivacity of our faith. A lively faith should not be confounded with a *living* faith. We call that a living faith which is accompanied with sanctifying grace, which is the life of the soul; while a lively faith is a clear, enlightened, luminous faith which manifests what it teaches us as clearly as if we beheld it with our eyes or heard it with our ears. It resembles a clear night in which all the stars are resplendently visible in the sky, or the view of a city which a traveller visits and contemplates near by.

When travelling you perceive from a high mountain a great city on the border of the horizon, almost lost in the distance, and then, continuing your route, you see it near by; you enter it and visit its edifices. How different, how much clearer is your view of it! Thus a weak, obscure faith sees the mysteries revealed by God in the remote distance; a lively faith, on the contrary, beholds them clearly, unmarred by shadow or mist. Animated by this faith, the faithful feel as if they had lived with Christ and the apostles. Such was the faith of the saints; such is still to day the faith of fervent Christians; it shows forth in their words and works. In fact, it is the character of faith to reveal itself in holy works, as light in rays; in other words, a lively faith is also an efficacious faith.

Efficacy of faith. Faith is efficacious, active, when it has results and is fruitful in good works. Without works faith is dead, St. James tells us, and avails nothing for eternal life; it shall even cause us to be judged more severely. To know the truths of salvation and not conform our life thereto is to render ourselves gravely guilty. The word of God is a seed which must produce fruit. Thus the life of a true Christian is like a field, while that of a bad Christian is a land covered with briers and thorns.

It was faith which produced the works we admire in the saints. Ah! let us not be satisfied with a sterile admiration; let us imitate them. Would to God faith were lively and efficacious in all hearts! Then we should see men occupy themselves with eternal things, we should see good works flourish and virtues reign everywhere, and with them peace and happiness.

O holy Virgin, who wast singularly blessed, for thou hadst perfect faith—*beata quæ credidisti*—obtain for us a faith like thine, help us to avoid the dangers in which our faith could be wrecked.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOPE.

Ut fortissimum solatium habeamus, qui confugimus ad tenendam propositam spem quam sicut ancoram habemus animæ tutam ac firmam (We have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm).—HEB. vi. 18.

HOPE, the second of the theological virtues, springs from faith like the stem from the root. At sight of God as faith represents Him to us, a Father full of goodness, the heart naturally awakens to a sweet hope.

As faith is the principle of our spiritual life, so hope is the principle of our consolation and our strength. The divine Master wishes that we should follow Him by means of many crosses and trials; but He promises us great blessings, the hope of which affords us great consolation—*fortissimum solatium;* consolations so powerful that they not only soften the hardest trials but give us joy in the midst of tears: *Spe gaudentes.* We have, further, labors to endure, storms to encounter; then hope is our strength; it upholds us like a column, that the edifice of our

faith may not crumble; like an anchor it holds the bark of our faith fast and firm amid all the storms of life.

How fervently we ought to love this sweet and precious virtue of hope! How earnestly we should endeavor to develop it in our souls! To this end let us consider: I. What hope is; II. What are the qualities this virtue should possess.

What is hope? We frequently understand by the virtue of hope that tranquil confidence of a soul which relies upon the providence of God with a filial abandonment in all the events of life. This confidence in God is hope in the broadest sense, or rather it is the perfection of hope.

Christian hope, in the strict sense of the word, is a virtue which aspires to the possession of God in heaven and relies on succor from above to attain this happiness. It is defined a supernatural virtue, by which we hope from God eternal beatitude and the means of attaining it, because Jesus Christ has merited it for us and it has been promised us by God, who is infinitely good, all-powerful, and faithful in His promises. This definition contains the object and the foundation of our hope.

Object of our hope. Eternal beatitude and the means of attaining it are what we hope from God.

Eternal beatitude, or the salvation of our souls, consists in the possession of God and the joys of heaven—the only good worthy the munificence of the King of kings or the desires of our heart. All the rest, being perishable, can have no value to an immortal soul, which requires immortal blessings. All other things are incapable of satisfying our desires; only eternal salvation fully meets the aspirations of the human heart; salvation, God's gift *par excellence*, is the living water made to assuage our great thirst for happiness.

We also hope from God the means of attaining salvation—that is, the graces and succors necessary to lead a Christian life here below: a condition which God requires on our part to obtain salvation and merit eternal glory. The succors of which we speak include not only spiritual graces, which help us to resist evil and obey God's law, but also our daily bread, health, and all things necessary and useful for our corporal existence in this world. All these blessings we should expect from God; and though He desires above all to give us graces useful to the soul, He will in nowise refuse us succors of an inferior order which concern the body.

The foundation of our hope includes four parts: the merits of Jesus Christ, God's infinite goodness to us, His almighty power, and His fidelity to His promises.

The merits of Jesus Christ are infinite, and in giving His blood for us He poured out in advance the price of all that we may ask of God for time and eternity. It is for this reason the Church terminates all her prayers in these words to the Father: *We beseech Thee through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord.*

Goodness. God is a Father whose goodness surpasses that of the best of fathers among men, that of the tenderest mother for her child. If a mother, He Himself tells us, can forget her child, He will not forget us. It is true, however, that God's goodness is a severe goodness, which does not fear to thwart His children to make them better and happier. *Such as I love I rebuke and chastise,* He tells us (Apoc. iii. 19). He does not always grant the earthly advantages they ask of Him, because He reserves for them others of more value; and if the tender Jesus allowed His friend Lazarus to die and his sisters to be plunged in grief it was in nowise in default of goodness. . . . If He does not spare the cross to His dearest servants it is because He wishes to enrich them as much as possible with the glory of heaven, which is only acquired by crosses. This is the sense in which His goodness to us has no limit. This is why our Heavenly Father is more disposed to grant us all blessings than an earthly parent to give his children the bread they ask. . . .

All-powerfulness of God. The power of God equals His goodness. All the good He wishes us He can execute. Nothing is impossible to Him, nor even difficult, either in the order of grace or nature. From stones He can raise up children to Abraham, from a persecutor an apostle, from a heretic a doctor of His Church, from the greatest sinner a saint, provided man, always free to refuse grace, does not resist His divine action. Salvation, sanctification, said the Saviour to His disciples, is impossible to man, but all things are possible to God. . . .

Fidelity to His promises Men too frequently promise and do not execute. Not so with God. *Every man is a liar*, says the apostle, *but God is true* (Rom iii. 4). No, he says Himself; *I will not make void*, I will not contradict, *the words that proceed from my mouth* (Ps. lxxxviii. 35). Now God has promised us salvation and the means of attaining it, Jesus Christ unceasingly repeats this promise to us. Yes, this promise already irrevocable in a divine mouth, God willed to confirm by a solemn promise, in order, says St. Paul, *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, we who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us* (Heb. vi. 18).

Such is the immutable foundation of our hope. It rests at once on the merits of Jesus

Christ, on the goodness of God, His power, and His fidelity to His promises.

Qualities of hope. Our hope must be constant and efficacious.

It should be constant not to fail in the trials of life. If it be true that all virtue must be strengthened and made perfect through trial, hope and confidence in God more than all other virtues need to be thus exercised. Therefore God tries the confidence of His servants: He tried Abraham by ordering Him to immolate his son Isaac; he tried Moses and Israel by leading them to the border of the Red Sea while Pharao pursued them; Jesus Christ tried His disciples, permitting a storm to overtake their bark while He slept and seemed to have forgotten them; He tried the multitude that followed Him, leading them into the desert where there was nothing with which to appease their hunger. In a word, it is the way of the Lord to lead His faithful to the border of the tomb, and bring them thence to manifest His goodness and His power.

The Christian, then, must beware of losing confidence in adversity, in temptations and trials, of yielding to sadness or discouragement. Let him remember that then particularly is the time to display strength of soul, confidence in God. His confidence should even increase in trial and sustain us until the Lord

come, who shall not fail to *come to his aid, and who shall not be slack—Veniens veniet, et non tardabit* (Hab. ii. 3).

Our hope must be constant, and it must also be efficacious; that is, it must co-operate actively with God and with His grace. Hope awaits from God not the total accomplishment of an action which leaves us nothing to do, but a succor which supplies our deficiency and which supposes our co-operation, as the apostle expresses it, saying: *It is not I* who accomplish the good work, *but the grace of God within me. God wishes*, says St. Augustine, *that we do all that is within our power, and that we ask of Him that which is beyond it. Let us trust in God*, says St. Ignatius, *as if all depended upon Him, and let us, on our part, act as if all depended upon ourselves.* This is expressed in the common but excellent saying: *God helps those who help themselves.*

Moreover, it is a general rule of Providence that man must use his faculties and all the means in his power, then await from God the resources he lacks, as much in the order of grace as in that of nature. Thus the farmer would have no harvest if he remained with his arms folded; he must co-operate with God by his labor. God gives fertility to the earth and the dew of heaven; but man must labor and sow his seed, then he may hope that God will make it grow

and ripen his harvest. It is the same with salvation and all the Christian life: man must devote himself thereto, he must study, labor, watch, and combat; but in doing what is in his power he may hope and expect succor from God, who is never first to abandon His servants. He tries them, but not beyond their strength: *God will not suffer you*, says the apostle, *to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it* (1 Cor. x. 13). If, then, you fight valiantly God will infallibly help you to be victorious.

And who would not hasten to labor and combat with courage at sight of the infallible rewards with which victory shall be crowned? The *sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18). *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor. iv. 17).

CHAPTER XL.

CHARITY LOVE OF GOD.

Major horum est caritas (The greatest of these is charity).—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

HERE is the virtue which bears the sceptre and the crown, the queen of virtues—divine charity. As humility shines at the base of Christian sanctity, so charity beams at the summit; humility is like a diamond rock, and charity like a sun which illumines the mystical edifice of virtues.

Charity, veritable divine fire, inflames the heart with purest love and produces therein a double flame, springing one portion of it towards heaven and the other towards earth; one is love for God, the other is love for our neighbor. There is only one virtue of charity, but it embraces a double object—God loved for Himself, and our neighbor loved for God. In as far as it relates directly to God it is called divine love; in as far as it relates to our neighbor it is called love for our neighbor, fraternal charity, or simply charity.

Let us speak first of love of God, which may

be called the virtue *par excellence*, the principle and abridgment of all sanctity. St. Ignatius, enlightened by God to comprehend its price, asked but this in prayer: Lord, he cried, dispose of me and of all that is mine as Thou wilt, take from me all things, but give me Thy love and Thy grace; Thy love alone sufficeth me. *If a man*, says the Holy Spirit, *should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing* (Cant. viii. 7).

Then we should ardently desire so precious a blessing, and do all that depends on us to inflame our hearts with this divine fire.

To this end let us consider: I. The motives for loving God; and II. The qualities our love should have.

I. Motives proper to excite divine love in our hearts. These motives are: God's love for us, His benefits, His divine perfections.

God's love for us. *Let us love God*, says St. John, *because God first hath loved us* (1 John iv. 19). The most powerful motive to love is the love another bears us. We naturally love those who love us; and the way to make one's self loved is to love others, according to the well-known maxim: *Si vis amari, ama.* Now, God loves us, and has loved us for all eternity: *Yea, I have loved thee*, He says to each of us, *with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee* (Jer. xxxi. 3). He loves us like a

tender father, and He desires that we should address Him by this sweet name. In spite of our ingratitude He continues to love us, as we see by the parable of the prodigal son of the Gospel. . . . He goes so far as to tell us that He loves us more than a mother does her child. Then let us love God, since He has first loved us, and loved us so tenderly.

God's benefits. What new motives do they not give us to love God! If you are in want and a generous man comes to your assistance, gives you food, a house, an honorable maintenance, would you not love this benefactor? But what benefactor is comparable to God? *What hast thou that thou hast not received of Him?* (1 Cor, iv. 7). Your existence, a noble human nature made to the image of God—from whom have you received it? The food which nourishes you, the clothes which cover you, the light which illumines your day, and all these exterior blessings—from whom do you receive them? And if you go into the order of grace how many new treasures you find! A future of eternal glory and the most admirable means of attaining it, the merits of Christ, the Church and her divine sacraments, are placed at your disposition; then there is that special providence which caused you to be born in the bosom of the true faith, and watched over you since your birth to the present hour. Who can

tell all your benefits? If you had received from a man one-millionth part of the good God has given you, you would not know how to show him your gratitude and love; what, then, will you render to God, your supreme Benefactor? Should you not love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength? . . . What would it be if we were to see God face to face as He is, infinitely lovely in Himself? Ah! would we not be enraptured with love like the blessed in heaven, if, like them, we could contemplate His infinite perfections? Would not our hearts be inflamed with the most ardent flames at sight of this wisdom, this holiness, this power, this beauty, of which all created beauty and perfection are but a shadow? Yes, the perfections of creatures are a shadow, but nothing more than a shadow, a weak image of the Creator's perfections. All that we see of grandeur, of beauty, of holiness comes from God, like rays from the sun, like streams from their source, and all things speak to us of the infinite perfections of which God is the source. Behold heaven and its stars, the earth and its fecundity, the sea and its immensity; . . . all these works of God bear the imprint of His hand and proclaim His greatness. Look at men and their admirable works, . . . the magnificence of kings, the power of their armies; all these are but a sha-

dow of the greatness of the King of kings. Contemplate the Church, her hierarchy, her worship, the beauties of every kind which adorn her, particularly her living ornaments, those pearls of all virtues which are resplendent in the saints; . . . they are so many rays of the eternal Sun.

Yes, the whole world announces the glory of God; it is a mirror which reflects, a book which relates, a hymn which extols the infinite glory, beauty, loveliness of its Author.

O beauty ever ancient, ever new! my heart is made for Thee, as my eyes for the light. Why can I not contemplate Thee like the seraphim, in order to burn, like them, with love for Thee!

Quality of divine love. How should we love God, and what are the qualities our love should have? To be true and perfect our love of God should be efficacious, constant, and generous.

Love is efficacious when it produces the effects, the fruits which God asks, and which consist in the observance of His holy law and the accomplishment of the divine will. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. If any one love me he will keep my word* (John xiv. 21, 23). It follows from this that love consists more in works than in words or affectionate outpourings of the heart. No doubt the sweet emotions we feel towards God, the tears of tenderness, the praise, the

canticles, the testimonies of affection which we offer Him, spring from love, but they are only its leaves; works only are its fruit and its infallible proof. *The proof of love*, says St. Gregory, *is the production of works.* Then would you know whether you truly love the Lord your God? Examine, not whether you experience a sensible and tender devotion, but whether you faithfully observe the law of God, whether you avoid sin, whether you seek the accomplishment of the divine will.

Love must be constant—that is, it must not fail either in prosperity or adversity. Alas! how many there are who, finding everything succeed according to their desires, attribute success to themselves, become inflated with pride, and forget God, their sovereign Benefactor! This is the shoal of prosperity. Others, tried by reverses, by afflictions, become discouraged, break forth into complaints, murmurs, and rebel against God, whose fatherly hand has touched them for their good; this is the shoal of adversity, in which many barks have been wrecked. How many are faithful to all their Christian duties, to all their pious exercises, while it is calm and a favorable wind fills their sails, but if storms, sufferings, humiliations come their courage fails and they abandon piety! *My son*, says Jesus Christ in the *Imitation, thou art not as yet a valiant and prudent*

lover, because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun upon meeting with a little adversity, and too greedily seekest after consolation. A valiant lover stands his ground in temptations and yields not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As he is pleased with me in prosperity, so I displease him not when I send adversity (b. iii. 6). It is not sufficient to be with Jesus on Thabor, or even to follow Him to the table of the cenacle; we must accompany Him to Calvary and remain with Mary at the foot of His cross.

Love, says the Holy Spirit, *is strong as death; the lamps thereof are lamps of fire and flames. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it* (Cant. viii. 6, 7).

Love should be generous. Generosity consists in giving, in laboring, in suffering, in making all sacrifices, and in making them joyfully for one whom we love. He who loves Jesus Christ gives Him what he can in the person of His Church and His poor; he labors for Him by fulfilling the duties which He imposes upon him; He endures all the trials which He sends him; he sacrifices his time, his rest, his most lawful satisfactions; he even goes so far as to sacrifice his life for God; and all this with a divine joy which love alone can give. *The love of Jesus,* says the author of the *Imitation, is noble and generous; it spurs us on to do great things, and excites us to desire always that which is most*

perfect. It equally bears all that is unequal. The lover flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free and not held. He gives all for all, and he has all in all, because he rests in one sovereign good above all, from whom all good flows and proceeds. Love feels no burden, values no labors, would willingly do more than it can. Love is thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in Him, even when it tastes not the relish of God's sweetness; for there is no living in love without some pain or sorrow (b. iii. 5).

It is in this sense that St. Ignatius says that the fire of love is fed with the wood of the cross.

The ideal of this generous love is Jesus Christ giving Himself so prodigally, immolating Himself so generously for the children of men—Jesus Christ in His manger, upon His cross, in the sacrament of our altars. His divine Heart is the model of divine love, and at the same time the source whence we must draw it. *I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?* (Luke xii. 49).

CHAPTER XLI.

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

Hoc est præceptum meum : Ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos (This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you).—JOHN XV. 12.

THE divine fire of charity produces a double flame, one of which makes us love God for Himself, and the other our neighbor for God's sake. These two loves, being but the same charity, are so intimately united that one cannot exist without the other. St. John bears witness to this in these words: *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother* (1 John iv. 20, 21).

It is by loving our neighbor that charity is most frequently exercised. God, being invisible, having need of nothing, rarely affords us occasion of exercising our charity towards Him; but our neighbor affords us continual opportunity. Therefore God has willed us to love Him in mankind, who are His children, and whom He substitutes for Himself. *As long*

as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me (Matt. xxv. 40).

Fraternal charity is a gift of God, a virtue by which we love our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. In other words, it is the charity by which we love God in His children, His images, His substitutes.

Love of our neighbor takes various names, according to the diversity of its acts. Hence the charity of benevolence, of union, of forbearance, of pardon, of kindness. . . . *It is a virtue of inestimable price. It contains all good, all Christian perfection. Above all things have charity*, says the apostle, *which is the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14).

That our hearts may be more and more inflamed with it, let us consider, I. How we should love this virtue; II. How we should practise it.

Love of fraternal charity. We must love this beautiful virtue with a love of predilection which shall cause us to seek it as the pearl of the Gospel, as the treasure hidden in the earth, as our supreme treasure. *Follow after charity* (1 Cor. xiv. 1). All motives urge us to seek it—motives on the side of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, motives on the side of charity itself, motives on the side of our neighbor, and motives on the side of our own interest.

Motives on the side of God and our Lord

Jesus Christ. God is so good to each one of us, He forgives us our sins, He treats us with ineffable kindness, patience, and longanimity; should we not in our turn be kind and indulgent towards our brethren? God is angry with the ungrateful man who, having experienced His mercy, did not fear to oppress his brother. *Thou wicked servant*, He says, *I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?* (Matt. xviii. 32, 33).

If we turn towards our Lord Jesus Christ do we not find that His virtue of predilection, the virtue of His Heart, is charity? Is it not the virtue which He recommends to us in a most special manner? *A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another* (John xiii. 34). Is it not the virtue of which He has given us the most powerful example, and which He most earnestly recommends by the lips of His apostles? *In this we have known*, says St. John, *the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* (1 John iii. 16).

Motives on the side of charity itself. Is it not the most necessary and the most excellent of virtues? There is no salvation without love for our neighbor. *Whosoever hateth his brother*

is a murderer, says St. John, *and he that loveth not abideth in death* (1 John iii. 15, 14).

What would become of a soul, a family, a community, human society, without charity? Would they not be a prey to egotism, discord, pauperism, pagan despotism? . . .

Charity is the most excellent of virtues. *The greatest of all*, says St. Paul, *is charity.* It is like the soul of all the other virtues; it gives them their lustre and beauty; the least actions receive from its influence an inestimable price. *Let all your things*, says the same apostle, *be done in charity* (1 Cor. xvi. 14).

Motives on the side of our neighbor. We should love men because they are our brothers, created like us to the image of God, born like us of the blood of Adam, regenerated like us by the blood of Jesus Christ. At sight of a fellow-being we should say with the brothers of Joseph: *He is our brother and our flesh* (Gen. xxxvii. 27).

Then there are unfortunate beings most poor, most wretched, most abandoned. . . . How can we fail to compassionate them? How can we not help them, if God has given us the means? . . .

Motives on the side of our own interest. We are all sinners, and we have need to tremble at sight of our sins; but let us be charitable and we are sure of pardon. *Blessed are the mer-*

ciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Judge not, that you may not be judged. If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you your offences (Matt. v. 7; vi. 14; vii. 1).

Do we fear for our eternal salvation? Let us possess charity; it is the mark of the children of God, the character of the elect. Would we be happy? Charity diffuses happiness everywhere, particularly in the heart where it dwells; it is a virtue which God rewards in this world.

Practice of charity. How ought we love our neighbor? What should our charity be?

It should be true and efficacious. *My little children*, says the Beloved Disciple, *let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth* (1 John iii. 18).

True and efficacious—that is, such as St. Paul describes it: *Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, endureth all things* (1 Cor. xiii. 4–7).

True and efficacious—that is, practising all the acts, fulfilling all the duties of charity, interior as well as exterior: respect, benevolence, kindness, consideration, forbearance, patience, pardon, conciliation, compassion, almsgiving, correction, edifying words, good example. . . . *Be charitable, . . . communicating to the necessi-*

ties of the saints. . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good (Rom. xii.)

Our charity must be conformable to the double rule which our Saviour gives us: *Love thy neighbor as thyself* (Luke x. 27), *as I have loved you* (John xv. 12).

It should be universal, embracing all men—friends and enemies. . . .

It should be exempt from the contrary faults of rash judgments, suspicion, detraction, bitter words, irritability, antipathies, envy, selfish friendships, a spirit of contradiction, obstinacy in one's opinion, want of consideration or courtesy. . . .

But how are we to acquire this beautiful and precious virtue which, forgetting itself, seeks in all things only the good of our neighbor? How are we to have the abnegation, the humility, the patience it supposes? Ah! it is particularly a gift of God, and we must receive it from Him. The Heart of Jesus is its source, His love and benefits its centre. Let our hearts be inflamed by the Heart of the divine Master, and breathe only charity at sight of His charity and His love for men; or, to speak less figuratively, we should on one side ask Him the grace of His love, and on the other earnestly endeavor to love our neighbor in all things as He has loved us.

CHAPTER XLII.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Hæc est vita æterna : Ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti, Jesum Christum (Now this is eternal life : That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent).—JOHN xvii. 3.

TO know Jesus Christ is to possess eternal life, because this knowledge produces love of God, the observance of His holy law—in a word, all sanctity ; and sanctity includes eternal life.

Understand that we do not speak here of a purely historical knowledge which manifests Jesus Christ to us as the founder of Christianity and the Church, as a personage of ancient times—a supereminent person, it is true, but remote, and with whom we have only faint and obscure relations. There is question, on the contrary, of the knowledge of Christ actual and present ; of knowing Him with a lively, intimate, loving, filial knowledge, like that which a child has of his father or mother ; this knowledge, as we see, is inseparable from love, with which it seems to be confounded.

To know Jesus Christ in this way is to comprehend that we have continual relations with Him, that we receive from Him all blessings, and that in Him rest all our hopes. To thus know Him is at the same time loving and serving Him.

To acquire this salutary knowledge let us consider Christ first in His person, then in His benefits.

I. Christ considered in His person. We may consider the person of Jesus Christ in two ways: exteriorly in a purely human and historical point of view, or interiorly as He appears to the eyes of faith.

If I consider Christ exteriorly He is that extraordinary man who lived in Judea under the empire of Augustus and Tiberius. We behold Him also in Bethlehem, the place of His birth, and in Jerusalem, the place of His death and resurrection. His exterior, simple and modest, attracted no attention; but when He opened His lips to preach His doctrine He excited such admiration that they regarded His words as superhuman, and cried out: *Nunquam sic locutus est homo*—Never hath man spoken like this. His preaching was accompanied with innumerable miracles, which filled Judea and the neighboring people with astonishment and respect. *A great prophet is come among us*, they cried; *God has visited His people.*

All beheld Him, the good and wicked, and all felt the influence of the superiority of His doctrine and His works; but this doctrine and these works caused Him to be loved by the good and hated by the wicked.

He is that Jesus who changed the face of the ancient world, and who on the ruins of paganism established that Catholic Church which we behold standing triumphant over all her enemies during nineteen centuries, like a rock amid the waves of the sea.

If I contemplate this admirable man with the eyes of faith I recognize that He is not simply a man, but a Man-God, God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. His contemporaries, with the exception of a privileged few, were ignorant of this mystery. *There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not*, said His precursor to the Jews. In fact, His humble exterior made Him regarded as an ordinary man; and even when He had manifested by innumerable miracles that He was master of nature and the depositary of all power, the people did not suspect that He was the God of the universe concealed under human form. For more than two years He had astonished Judea by His miracles, when one day, coming into the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi, He said to His disciples: Whom do men say that the Son of man is? Their answer showed that all re-

garded Him as a prophet and a saint, but no one suspected Him of being of a nature superior to man. The apostles themselves had little knowledge of His divinity; only the apostle St. Peter knew this great mystery, and confessed that Jesus whom he saw before him was *Christ, the Son of the living God*, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

From that moment all the apostles knew that their Master was their God. But this knowledge and this faith were very imperfect, and on the day of Christ's Passion it failed almost totally: *We had hoped*, they then said, *that Jesus would be the liberator of Israel.* However, when they saw Him risen from the dead their faith awakened to stronger life, and Thomas, the most incredulous among them, cried out: *My Lord and my God!* His ascension, which they all witnessed, strengthened their faith, which received its final light and supreme confirmation at the descent of the Holy Ghost. Then, fully enlightened, they recognized with transport the benefit which the world had received, and they understood these words of their Master: *God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son* (John iii. 16).

We, like the apostles, have received the Holy Spirit and the gift of faith. We know with sovereign certainty that Christ our Lord is the true Son of God, who deigned to clothe Him-

self with our humanity and become our brother. But is this faith lively and active in our souls? Is it not obscured and stifled, as it were, by the cares of this world? May it not be said to us: *There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you knew not?* And may they not also say: *Their eyes they have shut, lest at any time they should see with their eyes?* Then we must remove these veils and clouds, in order that there may be no obstacle to the light of faith, which will not be refused us if we humbly ask it, saying with the apostles: *Adauge nobis fidem*—Lord, increase our faith (Luke xvii. 5).

II. Benefits of Christ. No man, however benevolent, is comparable to Jesus Christ, the great Benefactor of mankind. To give bread to the poor, to procure for the sick an unknown specific which restores them to health, to save a man's life by rescuing him from imminent death, are benefits, very great benefits, to save a man's life by dying in his place is a benefit so sublime and so rare that it is difficult to find an instance of it. And nevertheless all these acts are nothing in comparison to the immense, universal, and wholly ineffable benefits of our Lord Jesus Christ. What, then, are these benefits? We may say that they are summed up in those of His incarnation, His doctrine, in the redemption, sanctification, and glorification of mankind.

1st. In His Incarnation He lays aside for love of us all the glory of His divinity, and, clothing Himself with our poor human nature, reduces Himself, God as He is, to the condition of man and becomes our brother; He abases Himself to this degree in order to raise us to the dignity of children of God.

2d. His doctrine is eternal wisdom; it teaches man the highest truths, the secret of peace and happiness. . . . If this divine doctrine were heeded and practised wars and calamities would disappear, the earth would become paradise in advance.

3d. Redemption is the act by which the Son of God redeemed us from eternal perdition to which sin had irrevocably condemned us. All, yes, all, would have been lost without Christ our Redeemer. If we have been saved from this abyss, if hope burns before our eyes, it is because the only Son of God deigned to die for us. *Christus pro nobis mortuus est* (Rom. v. 9).

4th. The sanctification of our souls consists in purifying them from the monstrous stains of sin, and giving them that purity, that light, that heavenly beauty which renders them like the angels. The Saviour accomplishes this sanctification by the ministry of His Church and by means of the sacraments which He has established for ever. What a benefactor of mankind is the Church! and the sacraments what gifts,

what sources of consolation, . . . particularly the Eucharist, that sacrament of love, in which Jesus Christ dwells personally in our midst and communicates Himself to our souls through an ineffable union! . . .

5th. Glorification. The completion and crown of all the gifts of our divine Benefactor is our glorification. Our glorification through Christ is being transferred from this world to heaven to become partakers of His beatitude and His glory during all eternity. Man, soul and body, shall be wholly transfigured in His glory and made like unto Jesus Christ Himself. *He will change the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory* (Phil. iii 21).

What can we say of such benefits and such a Benefactor? *What shall I render to the Lord,* says the prophet, *for all the things that He hath rendered to me?* (Ps. cxv. 12) *What can we give to this holy man,* said Tobias, *or what can be worthy of his benefits?* (Tobias xii. 1, 2).

He Himself deigns to tell us what He requires: *My son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you* (John xv. 12).

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino (He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord).—PROV. viii. 35.

THESE words which the Church places on the lips of the Blessed Virgin signify that devotion to this august and good Mother is the pledge of salvation and of all blessings. *He who shall find me*—that is, who shall learn to honor me with true devotion—will find through me true life, which is sanctity in this world and eternal glory in the next.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is, then, the most precious of treasures. This devotion is founded on the knowledge and love of this amiable and sublime creature, whom an archangel proclaims blessed among all women, and whom all generations proclaim blessed. Let us endeavor to acquire more and more of this knowledge and salutary love by considering the Blessed Virgin in herself and in her relation to us.

I. The Blessed Virgin in herself. If we consider the Blessed Virgin in herself and exteri-

orly, she was only an humble woman of Judea, without grandeur or splendor in the eyes of men. Though issue of the royal blood of David, she lived in an obscure condition, and was given in marriage to St. Joseph, who was also but a simple artisan. The house she inhabited in the little village of Nazareth, and which is preserved to this day at Loretto under the name of the *Holy House*, is but a frail edifice made to accommodate the most modest household. When Mary became the Mother of Jesus she busied herself with the care her Child claimed, fled with Him to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod, and returned with Him safe to Nazareth. Later she followed Him in His apostolic course, and on the day of His Passion she accompanied Him to Calvary.

After the descent of the Holy Ghost St. John, her adopted son, conducted her to Ephesus, where she lived several years, and finally received from Heaven the announcement of her approaching end. Then, leaving Ephesus, she returned to Jerusalem to die where her divine Son had died. She was sixty-five years of age, or, according to another opinion, seventy-two. Her tomb is shown at Jerusalem, but it is remarkable that, while the bones of all the saints are gathered with religious care, the only relic preserved of the august Mother of God is the veil which covered her head. It is for the rea-

son that her virginal body, like her Son's, did not remain in the tomb; the virgin Mother of God entered, as Jesus did, soul and body into heaven.

Such is the very simple history of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it presents nothing striking in the eyes of the world, not even the splendor of miracles which embellishes the lives of other saints. No; exteriorly Mary presents nothing which is not humble and obscure; all her glory is within: *Omnis gloria ejus ab intus* (Ps. xliv 14).

Considered interiorly, she is the holiest, the most august of all creatures which God has produced, the masterpiece of His hands. God, says St. Bonaventure, could make a more beautiful world, more brilliant stars, more magnificent heavens, but He could not produce a creature more august than the Virgin full of grace, Mother of His only Son and Queen of heaven.

Full of grace. Grace, the most precious of all heavenly gifts, was given her with a fulness which no other creature received. Through the privilege of her immaculate conception she was enriched from the beginning of her existence with treasures of grace, and at the moment of her birth she was higher in sanctity than other saints at the moment of death, so that she began the structure of her sanctification by placing its foundation upon the holy

mountains: *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis* (Ps. lxxxvi. 1). In fact, these graces which she received from the beginning she not only faithfully preserved, but constantly increased by the practice of all virtues and all good works. Her whole life was resplendent with the purest sanctity, an image, a perfect copy of that of her divine Son.

Mother of God O mystery of the divine maternity! Who can explain its grandeurs? It is a great thing to be a servant of God, to be His friend, His adopted child; but to be His Mother! . . .

A mother possesses an essential superiority over her child, who owes her respect, love, and obedience. When Mary saw her Son Jesus grow in age she knew that He, who appeared to the eyes of men only an amiable youth, was the Son of the Almighty; she unceasingly remembered the words of Gabriel: *Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and He shall be called the Son of the Most High.* Therefore, in contemplating this Son which the angel had announced to her she saw in Him, with the eyes of faith, the only Son of God, true God with His Father, and Creator of the universe. Now, this Son of the Most High was also, according to His humanity, the true Son of Mary, and the tenderest, most respectful and obedient of sons. Sometimes He lovingly embraced Mary or knelt be-

fore her and prayed her blessing; He listened to her wishes and obeyed the least sign of her will. What dignity for Mary, and what happiness! The woman of the Gospel said truly when, struck with wonder at the sight of Jesus, she exclaimed: *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!* (Luke xi. 27).

When He was still a weak and feeble infant Mary recalled these other words of the Angel Gabriel: *He shall be great, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever* (Luke i. 32). She saw, the world saw, we ourselves still see the fulfilment of these words The divine Infant whom Mary brought into the world grew; He became that Jesus who, by His miracles and His doctrine, proved that He was the true Son of God—that Jesus who died on the cross, who rose from the dead, founded the holy Church whose marvellous existence we behold in the world and whose children we are. Ah! we behold this divine Son of Mary ever present in His work upon earth, until the day when, in sight of our humanity, He will come in person and in all His glory to judge the universe.

Yes, Christ is great; He alone is great; He alone is the immortal King of ages, King of the universe, and it is He whom Mary calls her Son.

But if Mary is the Mother of the King of kings she must share in His glory and occupy a place near Him as a glorious Queen. Solomon descending from his throne to receive Bethsabee, his mother, and seating her at his right hand, is a figure of Christ placing the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, on the throne of glory suitable to her—the throne of the Queen of Heaven. For this reason the entire Church thus salutes her: *Ave, Regina cœlorum! Salve, Regina, et spes nostra, salve!*—Hail, Queen of Heaven! Save us, O our Queen, our hope and our salvation!

Mary is *Queen of Heaven*—Queen, as Jesus Christ is King. Hence we may know what her kingdom is, what are her insignias of royalty, and what is her royal power.

Her kingdom is the universe, and in an especial manner the Church—the Church militant, that struggling people whom she guides and protects as an invincible Queen; the Church triumphant, that people of saints in the midst of whom she rules as a glorious Queen more brilliant than the moon in the midst of the starry firmament.

Her insignia, her crown, her jewels, her robes—in a word, her royal splendor is like that of her glorious Son, and of an order infinitely superior to all that we see here below. It is called grace and glory, which she has received

in all their fulness; this grace and this glory give her a beauty which effaces all other created beauty and enraptures the blessed.

What shall we say of her power? It is the very power of her Son, of which she disposes by her supplications: *Omnipotentia supplex.*

Such is the grandeur, such is the glory of Mary considered in herself. The Church, then, has truly reason to exclaim: *Benedicta et venerabilis es, Virgo Maria, et omni laude dignissima: quibus te laudibus efferam nescio!*

II. The Blessed Virgin in her relation to us. Considered in her relation to us, Mary is our Mother—a Mother who knows and loves all her children, who can and will aid them, provided they themselves recognize her as their Mother and come to her with a filial heart.

Mary is our Mother. The Saviour, in His ineffable goodness, gave her to us when from His cross He addressed her these words, *Woman, behold thy son;* and to St. John, *Behold thy Mother!*

St. John, our Saviour's disciple, represents, in the opinion of the doctors, all His disciples—that is, each of us—so that these words of our dying Jesus are addressed to each of us, and to all of us He has given Mary for our Mother.

Mary is, then, our Mother! Do I believe this consoling truth with a lively faith? . . . St. Stanislaus, when he uttered these words, *She*

is my Mother! the Mother of God is my Mother! seemed to be beside himself and raised in ecstasy.

If Mary is my Mother she must love me like that mother who held me on her knees when I was a little child. Oh! when I think of that cherished being, single in her virtues among all the women of the world, that being whom I called my mother according to the flesh, her memory alone moves my heart. How sweet, how intimate are the ties which unite us! How intimate is a mother's knowledge of her child! What is comparable to her love for her child? . . .

Ah! our earthly mother is but a feeble image of the Mother we have in heaven. *Nemo tam mater*—there is no mother like her; she knows us, she loves us, in a wholly different way from our earthly mother.

She knows us intimately; she loves all her children, even the most indifferent and ungrateful; she desires their good for time and eternity, and she has the power to procure it for them. Were they despairing she could restore them to hope and life; and this good Mother will certainly cause them to experience her admirable kindness, if they, on their part, do not repel her maternal hand, if they do not refuse to be her children. *Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me*—Let little children come to me.

Now, we become children of Mary as soon as we recognize her as our Mother and go to her with filial confidence, which is done by practising devotion to Mary.

This holy and salutary devotion includes all acts of piety—the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, her praises, the celebration of her feasts, the imitation of her virtues. . . .

But our devotion to Mary should be a *special* devotion—that is, a devotion superior to that which we have for other saints, for they are only our brothers and our friends, while the august Mary is our Mother.

May we possess this special and filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin! May we ever practise it more perfectly! *Then we shall have found life and shall have salvation from the Lord.*

CHAPTER XLIV.

ST. JOSEPH.

Vir Mariæ, de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus (Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ).—MATT. i. 16.

OUR hearts are the temples of the living God; the Holy Trinity abides in them and is pleased to see therein a triple altar: one raised to Jesus Christ, another to Mary, his holy Mother, and a third to St. Joseph, his foster-father. On these altars we should burn the incense of our devotion, which rises in an odor of sweetness before the face of the Most High. We offer our incense to Jesus by honoring Him as the only Son of God; to Mary, by honoring her as the Mother of God; to St. Joseph, by honoring him as the foster-father of Jesus Christ and the spouse of the purest of virgins.

May our hearts be ever perfumed with this triple devotion! In it we shall possess a pledge of all blessings.

Let us speak to-day of devotion to St. Joseph. To excite this blessed devotion more and more in our hearts let us consider St. Jo-

seph first in himself, then as the patron and protector of those who invoke him.

I. St. Joseph in himself. If I consider St. Joseph with human eyes—that is, exteriorly—I find nothing in him to distinguish him from ordinary men. True, the royal blood of David flows in his veins; but the splendor of his ancestry is hidden in the obscurity of his condition, and the eyes of men see nothing but an humble workman, a simple artisan.

If we penetrate into the interior of St. Joseph, if with the eyes of faith we contemplate him as he appears before God and the angels, we find him great with a dignity surpassing all human grandeur. This humble artisan has found grace with the Most High; the King of kings has chosen him among all men to be the spouse of the Virgin Mary and the foster-father of the incarnate Word.

Spouse of Mary. To realize the sublimity of this title we must comprehend the grandeur of her whom God Himself calls *full of grace* and *blessed among all women*. When I contemplate Mary the glory of the most august queens fades into shadow and the whole universe seems to bow before her throne. St. Denis had the happiness to see her when she was still on earth, and the superhuman majesty visible in her made such an impression upon him that had he not known she was a mortal creature

he would have adored her as a divinity. What a favor is a simple apparition of the Blessed Virgin with which some souls have been honored! Now, St. Joseph saw Mary not in a fleeting apparition but in family life. He was able to live with her, converse with her in the most intimate familiarity; he was her spouse, the object of the love, the conjugal respect of the holiest of spouses. What a source of sanctity for this happy saint! If St. John the Baptist at the visitation of the Blessed Virgin leaped with joy at a simple word of Mary's and was sanctified by the sound of her voice, if Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit by her presence, what abundance of grace, what treasures of benediction enriched the soul of Joseph during the thirty years he lived with the Mother of God! . . .

O Blessed spouse of Mary! make us sharers in thy interior riches.

Foster-father. Though the name *foster-father* indicates that St. Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus, it nevertheless contains an incomparable dignity. Do we, in fact, understand the sense of these two words, *father* of the Son of God, *foster*-father of the Son of God made man?

The dignity of a father is great. A father is to his child a superior and sacred being, an object of love, of respect, of perfect submission.

Such was Joseph, the spouse of Mary, to the divine Infant conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin, his Spouse. Therefore see how differently from Simeon he takes Him in His arms. The fortunate Simeon, who was only a stranger to Mary, received by a singular favor the divine Infant from her hands and was able to hold Him in his arms once for a few moments; but St. Joseph takes Him when he wills and as long as he wills, for it is the Child of his Spouse, and therefore a treasure which belongs to him. Yes, this dear Child regards him as His father. See how He throws Himself upon his neck, how lovingly He embraces him; then see how He respectfully inclines and kneels with Mary before Joseph to honor his fatherly dignity. Ah! here indeed is the true meaning of the dream of that other Joseph, who was the figure of the spouse of Mary: Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, saw the sun and moon bow down before him to adore him. Does not this read: Jesus and Mary, and after them all Christians, bowing before the dignity of him whom a God made man calls His father?

And not only does He venerate St. Joseph with filial respect, but He obeys him: *Erat subditus illis.* He, the author of the Fourth Commandment; He who imprinted on the human heart and engraved on the tables of Moses this great law, Honor thy father and thy mother—

that is, render them love, respect, obedience—fulfils it Himself to its fullest extent, and manifests Himself to the world a perfect model of filial love, obedience, and respect.

Which must we admire most, Jesus, who fulfils these duties, or Joseph, who is the object of the filial piety of a God? . . .

As foster-father St. Joseph received the sublime mission to provide for all the temporal wants of the Son of God. It was he who prepared His poor cradle at Bethlehem, who procured for the tender Infant and His Mother all they required against the inclemency of the season; it was he who withdrew them from the fury of Herod, softened for them the discomforts of a long journey, and in their exile sought for them shelter, food, and clothing until he brought them back safe to Nazareth. There he continued to labor for them by the sweat of his brow. Oh! with what love he endured the most arduous labor to earn a subsistence for Jesus and Mary.

But what shall be his reward?

For a loving heart the happiness of serving loved ones is sufficient reward, and St. Joseph asked no more; but not thus did the generous heart of Jesus accept his devotion. He who rewards with an immortal crown a glass of cold water given for love of Him; He who commands us all to honor our father and mo-

ther—what glory does He not reserve for such a benefactor, for the man whom He Himself called father! *Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods* (Matt. xxiv. 47).

In this world did He not procure him an anticipation of this reward by affording him the ineffable happiness of dying in His arms and those of His Blessed Mother? Yes, St. Joseph was the happiest of men: he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. . . . In heaven a throne has been erected for him apart—a throne distinguished from all the others, for among all the saints St. Joseph alone is the spouse of Mary and foster-father of the King of glory.

Then St. Theresa, and the entire Church with her, justly proclaim the power of St. Joseph and extol the excellence of his patronage. . . .

II. St. Joseph patron and protector of those who invoke him. Honor all the saints, writes St. Theresa, but have a special devotion to St. Joseph. The other saints have power to obtain us certain determined graces; St. Joseph's power of intercession is limitless.

Yes, St. Joseph is a universal patron. At the same time it is not without reason that we invoke him in a special manner:

1st. As the patron of Christian families. . . .

2d. As the patron of the great Christian family, the universal Church. . . .

3d. As the patron of education. . . .

4th. As the patron of youth. . . .
5th. As the patron of workmen. . . .
6th. As the patron of temporal affairs. . . .
7th. As the patron of chastity. . . .
8th. As the patron of the interior life. . . .
9th. As the patron of a happy death. . . .

May we worthily honor St. Joseph and merit his salutary and powerful protection! O holy Virgin! obtain for us a great love for thy august spouse; and thou, O glorious St. Joseph! give us thy love for Jesus and Mary. This grace alone will be for us the pledge of all good.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE HOLY ANGELS.

Administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos qui hæreditatem capient salutis? (Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?).—HEB. i. 14.

ESIDES the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the other saints, we must also honor the angels of paradise.

Faith teaches us that God peopled heaven with an innumerable multitude of angels, who are, like the princes of His house and the assistants of His throne, always in adoration before His sublime Majesty. They are also His ministers and servants, forming numerous legions ever ready to fly to the execution of His orders throughout the whole universe. Three among them are known to us by name: St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael. A great number are charged to protect men; these we call guardian angels.

We should honor our guardian angel in a special manner; it is a devotion which a good Christian should never fail to practise.

In order to excite this salutary devotion more

and more in our hearts let us consider, first, what faith teaches us of our guardian angel; and, second, with what homage we should honor him.

I. Doctrine of faith. We know by faith that God in His mercy has given us each a guardian angel. *See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you*, says the Saviour, *that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 10). How great is the dignity of souls! exclaims St. Jerome, explaining this passage, since God has confided each one from its birth to the charge of an angel.

To truly appreciate the sense of these words let us remark that this angel is a heavenly spirit, a prince of heaven, superior in dignity, beauty, and power to the greatest monarchs of earth. . . .

Then great is the dignity of our souls in God's eyes, since He commits them to the guardianship of such defenders.

Speeding with lightning swiftness wherever God sends them, devoted to His will, these blessed spirits attach themselves to their charges and guard them as treasures confided to them by God. They love us as the children of God, as the price of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Our good angel is ever at our side, day and

night, at home and abroad, in the midst of our occupations and in our journeys; he is with us everywhere to protect us from all evil, to preserve us from all that could injure our souls and our bodies, and to help us to perform the good God asks of us.

He invites us and helps us to pray; he offers our prayers to the Most High.

He encourages us to observe the law of God, to fulfil all our duties; he counts all the steps we take for God. . . .

He inspires us with horror of sin. Seeing the snares and scandals with which the world is filled, he withdraws us from it as much as he can, and turns our feet from all dangerous places and the occasions of sin. . . .

At the moment of temptation he defends his charge against the assaults of the infernal lion. He encourages us to resist the enemy promptly, with energy and perseverance; to arm ourselves with prayer; to even add to prayer labor and fasting. . . .

If he have the misfortune to see his charge consent to mortal sin and fall into enmity with God, he endeavors to make him rise from this deplorable state either by suggesting to him thoughts of sincere repentance or by rousing his conscience with salutary remorse. . . .

If it happen that the sinner, rebellious and deaf to grace, hardens his heart, throws off all

restraint, and abandons himself with frenzy to his evil desires and the movements of the evil one, the good angel does not abandon him; he prays for him, and awaits a lucid moment when he will perhaps accept grace.

It is particularly at the hour of death that our good angel assists us and defends us—that supreme moment when the evil one redoubles his fury, *knowing that he hath but a short time* (Apoc. xii. 12). Then, also, he helps us to resign ourselves to God's will, to devoutly make Him the sacrifice of our life, to timely and worthily receive the sacraments, to endure with patience the sufferings of illness and the agony of death.

After death, if the soul be found in a state of mortal sin the angel of the Lord abandons her at once, for she belongs to the demons. They fall upon her as their prey, drag her first before the tribunal of God, then precipitate her into hell.

If the soul which has left the body be in a state of grace, but still charged with a debt of temporal pains which she has not paid in this life, he leads her to purgatory, where he does not fail to console her.

When the soul is purified from all stain and free from all debt, having fully expiated her sins in this life or the other, the angel guardian, in company with other heavenly spirits, introduces

her in triumph into the abode of the elect. It is for this reason that the Church in her funeral service sings: *In paradisum deducant te angeli!*

Such are the benefits which our angel guardians wish to bestow upon us; if their desires are not always realized it is because their charges place obstacles in the way because of their little faith, their little confidence, their little devotion to guardian angels.

II. Devotion to the angel guardian. According to the opinion of St. Bernard, we should honor our angel guardian by respect, confidence, docility, and by imitating his virtues.

Respect. We should respect his presence and never do anything which could grieve him or offend his eyes. To this end we must remember his presence, particularly when we are alone, when we are in prayer, and when temptation solicits us to sin. . . . If suddenly the veil of faith were removed, and this heavenly personage appeared visibly before us, how great would be our respect! . . . Would we dare to commit the least sin before his eyes? . . .

Confidence—confidence exercised by prayer and invocation. Our angel guardian is more powerful than all our enemies; he can protect us in all perils, help us in all needs, but we must ask his assistance. Good Christians invoke their good angel in the morning, they invoke him in the evening, they invoke him in

the dangers of travelling, in their needs and temptations; they are pleased to repeat this simple but pious prayer: Angel of God who art my guardian, since the divine goodness has confided me to thy care, deign to enlighten, guard, direct, and govern me this day in all things.

Docility. Our good angel suggests to us holy thoughts: Do not go in such a society, he tells us, do not read such a paper, do not utter such words. . . . Is there question of a duty to be fulfilled, of a good action to be performed? The voice of our angel is heard in the depth of our heart: Do what your parents, your masters command you; assist at Mass; say your prayers well; endure that offence or that trial with patience. . . . Such are the inspirations of our good angel. We must listen to them and follow them with docile obedience; and if we feel too weak, if our strength or courage fail us, we must ask his assistance, saying: My good angel, help me; sustain my by thy prayers.

Imitation. Our angel guardians give us the example of all virtues, particularly of obedience, charity, and piety.

They give us an example of obedience, since to obey the orders of God they come from heaven to earth to guard us, with whom they continue to remain, accompanying us in all our ways during all the years of our life: *Cum essem*

vobiscum, per voluntatem Dei eram (Tob. xii. 18). Is our obedience to the orders of God, which are manifested to us by our superiors, as perfect, as persevering? . . .

They give us an example of charity. Charged with our guardianship, they love us tenderly, though frequently we show them little gratitude; they seek only our good, without any hope of return from us. If the good angel's counsels be despised, if he fail in his efforts against the malice of his charge, who enrols himself on the side of impiety, who blasphemes God and His Church, who spreads calumny and scandal to ruin souls, then, even though it would seem but just to exterminate this enemy of God, he does not strike him, he still prays for him, he still asks for mercy, like Christ, who prayed and wept to the end for the guilty Jerusalem.

They give us an example of piety. Though they are upon earth and accompanying their charges to the most profane places, they never lose sight of the presence of God, and they are always in prayer and adoration. *Their angels see the face of my Father who is in heaven*, says the Saviour. After their example we should walk in the presence of God, frequently offering Him the incense of our prayers, prostrating ourselves before His face with the deepest respect.

Ah! if we honor our angel guardian in this

way; if, instead of opposing an obstacle to his zeal, we second it by our co-operation and our docility, what joy we shall cause him! What powerful succor we shall receive from him! How easily we shall walk in the path of virtue and persevere unto the end therein!

CHAPTER XLVI.

PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Verbum crucis pereuntibus quidem stultitia est; iis autem qui salvi fiunt, id est nobis, Dei virtus est (The word of the cross to them indeed that perish is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God).—1 Cor. i. 18.

IF Jesus Christ is the light of the world, nowhere does He enlighten souls as He does upon the cross; if He is the Master come to instruct the world, nowhere does He give such lessons as from the height of the cross. It is here upon this holy cross that the divine Word has most loudly spoken. It is upon this mysterious tree that the root of Jesse blossomed and gave forth its sweetest odors. It is upon the cross that Christ is the ensign of nations: *In that day shall be the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of peoples* (Isaias xi. 10). It is upon the cross that He is the salvation of all those who look upon Him: *Whosoever, being struck, shall look on it shall live* (Num. xxi. 8).

O book written by the eternal Wisdom! open Source of living water to all Jerusalem.

O Tree of life, Tree of true knowledge, whose fruits give immortality! . . .

The cross. Jesus suffering upon the cross teaches us all things, all the truths of divine wisdom; among others hatred of sin, contempt for the world, love of God and our neighbor—three fundamental lessons, three great practical rules, which should be traced in the depths of our hearts.

Let us try to be more and more penetrated with them by considering in what way Jesus crucified teaches us hatred of sin, contempt for the world, love of God and our neighbor.

I. Hatred of sin. Hatred of sin, which is also called the fear of God, the beginning of wisdom, is that mysterious rock upon which the wise man built his house—that is, the edifice of his salvation.

To hate sin we must know what it is, comprehend that it is an evil, the greatest of all evils.

Now, the cross shows how great an evil sin is, in itself as well as in its punishment.

In itself sin is an offence against God, an outrage offered to the supreme Majesty—an outrage the extent of which is shown us by the cross, by the reparation required for it by divine justice.

Behold Jesus, the true Son of God, in whom He is well pleased, dragged before the tribunal

of men, spat upon, tormented, executed like the worst of criminals. . . . Why? To repair the outrage offered to God by sin. What, then, must we think of a crime which needed such an expiation? . . .

In its punishment. The punishment of sin is eternal damnation, supreme misery, which the cross makes us understand by showing us the ransom which redeemed us from it. What are we to think of hell when we see the only Son of God descend from heaven, be made man, humble Himself to become a worm of the earth, submit to all the ignominies, all the torments of His Passion, to save us from its fire? Ah! the blood of God, poured forth as ransom, is of infinite price; eternal damnation, then, which required such a ransom, is a supreme misfortune, in a measure infinite. It is this which Jesus would have us understand by those grave words uttered on His way to Calvary: *Weep not over me, but weep over yourselves; for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*

II. Contempt for the world. I understand by the world not only the perishable goods of this world, but also the spirit, the ideas, the maxims, and the principles which commonly reign among people of the world. Now, the world is infinitely contemptible, because it is as foolish, as pernicious as it is criminal. We

see this in the mystery of the cross, which shows us what the world thinks of Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ thinks of the world.

What does the world think of Jesus Christ—of Him who is the supreme God and the Eternal Wisdom? To show what it thought of Him it is sufficient to say that it despised Jesus Christ, repelled Jesus Christ, crucified Jesus Christ. *The world knew Him not, His own received Him not. If the world hate you, know that it hath hated me before you* (John i. 10, 11; xv. 18).

What does Jesus Christ—that is, the Eternal Truth—think of the world? To show what He thinks of the world it is sufficient to say that He regards it as the reign of Satan. Speaking of His Passion, He says: *Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out* (John xii. 31). The world and Satan, in the eyes of Jesus Christ, are one and the same enemy; the world is a perverse people, Satan is the chief who governs them; the world is a body, Satan is the spirit which animates it. It is for this reason Jesus Christ has declared against it a war unto death; He fought it unrelentingly, he conquered and crushed it: *Ego vici mundum* (John xvi. 33).

And what has been this combat? What has been this victory? It is particularly on Calvary and in the streets of Jerusalem that we see

Christ warring with the world. It is there that He tramples under foot all its goods, its riches, its honors, its pleasures. . . . It is there that He sustains the shock of all its menaces, its derision, its calumnies, its outrages, its injustices, its plunders, its violence, its torments. . . .

He sustains the shock of all its assaults; He defies all its rage, all its power; He permits it to exhaust against Him all its iniquity and all its fury: *Nunc hora vestra et potestas tenebrarum*—This is your hour, in which the power of darkness may work freely. Christ in His Passion, abandoned to the mercy of a perverse people, appeared like a rock which defies the waves and tempests: *Christus autem erat petra.* . . . Shall we understand after this how we are to conduct ourselves in regard to this world? . . .

III. Love of God and our neighbor. To love God and our neighbor comprises all Christian sanctity. Now, Jesus Christ upon the cross teaches us to love God and our neighbor with the most perfect love.

He teaches us to love God by showing us how God has loved us: *He hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us* (Eph. v. 2). *Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us* (1 John iv. 19). Let us love God, do what is pleasing to Him, even at the price of sacrifice, suffering, death. . . .

He teaches us to love our neighbor by immolating Himself for love of men and by praying for His executioners. What an example of charity! *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John xv. 12, 13). *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke xxiii. 34). Let us note these words: *Love one another, as I have loved you.* . . .

Let us fix our eyes, then, upon the suffering Saviour; we shall find in Him a model of all virtues, and at the same time we shall draw from His wounds divine strength to imitate until death the great examples He has given us.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

Ab ortu solis usque ad occasum, in omni loco sacrificatur et offertur nomini meo oblatio munda (From the rising of the sun even to the going down, in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean offering).—MALACH. i. 11.

WE have before our eyes the accomplishment of these prophetic words, which were uttered five hundred years before Christ. Putting them in the mouth of the prophet Malachias, God announced to the world the future institution of a universal and perpetual sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Mass which is daily offered in the Catholic Church. The prophet calls it a *clean offering*—that is, a holy and perfect sacrifice, infinitely pleasing to God, and proper to obtain for us all His favors.

What, then, is the sacrifice of the Mass, and how should we offer it?

I. What is the holy sacrifice of the Mass?

It is the centre of Christian worship and of all our holy religion. The sacrifice of the

Mass, says St. Francis of Sales, is the sun of pious exercises, the heart of devotion, the centre of Christianity.

When you enter a Gothic cathedral, however little you consider the harmony of the edifice, you observe that all the parts, all the lines, all the mouldings relate to one sole central point—the altar, which is like the centre, ruling all, and in which all meet. In like manner the sacrifice of the Mass predominates in all religion. All passes through the hands of Jesus Christ, priest and victim, at the altar; through Him only do we offer God worthy praise; through Him only do we receive from heaven mercy and salvation.

The Mass is the sacrifice of the New Law, surpassing by itself in value all the sacrifices of the Old Law. From the beginning of the world, since the day when man fell into sin and incurred God's wrath, there have been sacrifices offered to appease Him. Abel chose the finest of his flocks to immolate to the Lord; Noe offered holocausts after the deluge; Melchisedech, the priest-king, offered God a sacrifice of bread and wine; Abraham and the patriarchs, his sons, erected altars in divers places to offer sacrifices, invoking the name of the Lord.

Later, when God had drawn His people from the bondage of Egypt, He established through

the ministry of Moses a sacerdotal tribe, of which Aaron was the head. Aaron was to offer God incense, bread, bleeding victims and holocausts in which the flesh of immolated animals was consumed by fire. These were sacrifices of worship, eucharistic, propitiatory, or supplicatory, according to the end for which they were offered.

When Aaron entered the sanctuary to sacrifice he was clothed in a purple robe, above which he wore a tunic of dazzling whiteness, and on his breast he bore an ephod enriched with precious stones, upon which were graven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Here was a figure of Jesus Christ, who went up to Calvary clothed in the white tunic of His innocence, covered with His blood as the purple of the priesthood, and bearing graven in His Heart the names of all those He redeemed by His death—that is, the names of all men.

The cross was an altar where the Son of God, both priest and victim, immolated Himself for the salvation of the world. This sacrifice contained in itself alone the different oblations of the Old Law, and surpassed them as reality surpasses shadow, as the Son of God surpasses the animals which were immolated on the altar as a figure of His death on the cross.

The bloody sacrifice of Calvary needed to be offered but once. It abundantly sufficed to glo-

rify the divine Majesty and reconcile earth with heaven; no other oblation was required. But as the Church had need of a sacrifice to render God perpetual worship and adoration worthy of Him, the Saviour deigned to provide it; in His infinite wisdom He found the secret of perpetuating through all ages the one sacrifice which He offered on the cross. Hence the institution of the holy sacrifice of the Mass—a divine institution which the Saviour made, on the eve of His death, at the Last Supper.

The Mass is an unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross. Here is the doctrine of faith concerning it proposed by the Council of Trent: *The divine sacrifice which is offered in the Mass contains the same Jesus Christ, immolated in an unbloody manner, who was immolated in a bloody manner on the cross. We have upon our altar the same victim and sacrificer as upon the altar of Calvary. He is offered now by the ministry of the priest, as He was offered by Himself; there is only the difference of the mode of oblation* (Sess. 22, chap. ii.)

Ah! if the veil of faith behind which the holy mysteries of the Mass are accomplished were to be raised for a moment, we would see the altar changed into a new Calvary, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God in a state of immolation, almost as Mary beheld Him at the descent from the cross. . . . He offers Himself to His hea-

venly Father, showing Him the wounds which He has preserved in His glorious body. Legions of angels surround Him, buried in adoration; it is the heavenly court which accompanies its King. . . .

The Mass is a source of propitiation—that is, of pardon—for the living and the dead. We are all sinners and have need of pardon during life and after death. During life we obtain through the merits of the divine Victim the grace of a sincere conversion. But the malice of men is so great, their sins so multiplied, that they continually call down upon themselves the chastisements of God. Now, what is it that retains God's arm, that appeases His wrath? Ah! it is the divine Victim of propitiation which never ceases, while sins cry for vengeance, to cry with a louder voice for mercy: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

After death comes, for the majority of the faithful departed, the expiation in purgatory. There must be a means of comforting the poor souls in their sufferings; the great means established by the Saviour is the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The souls to whom it is applied are sprinkled, as it were, with the blood of Jesus Christ; and this divine dew refreshes them, tempers the ardor of their flames, and even extinguishes them completely.

The holy sacrifice of the Mass, then, is a

source of propitiation for the living and the dead.

But to reap its precious fruits we must offer it devoutly.

II. How should we offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass? Properly speaking, the sacrifice of the Mass is only offered by the priest decreed by Jesus Christ to fulfil this august function. At the same time, in a broader sense and in a mediate manner, as we say, the faithful offer the Holy Sacrifice by an intermediary and through the hands of the priest. This they can do either by having the Mass celebrated for their intention or by assisting at it devoutly.

When we have the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered for a certain intention the most powerful supplications rise to the throne of God for the favor we desire. It is Jesus Christ Himself, the divine Victim, who supplicates His Father and presents His Blood and His Wounds. Nothing is more laudable than to have Masses celebrated for one's self or for others, for the living or the dead. . . .

When we assist at Mass we take part in the holy action which the priest performs at the altar. As the priest is delegated by the Church to publicly offer the sacrifice in the name of all the faithful, the latter veritably concur in the sacrifice by the very fact of assisting thereat by uniting themselves in mind and heart with the

celebrant. This is clearly manifested by the words which the priest pronounces in offering the chalice. He does not say, *I offer Thee*, but, *We offer Thee, Lord, the chalice of salvation.*

Therefore to assist well at Mass it behooves us to unite our intention with the priest, saying silently in our hearts or with our lips: Lord God Almighty, I unite myself with the priest, the minister of Thy altar, to offer to Thy divine Majesty the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Thy only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

After uniting your intention with the priest summon before your eyes by a lively act of faith the great mystery which is being accomplished on the altar, and remember that the Mass is but the unbloody renewal of the bloody sacrifice which was offered on the cross. What would it be if, knowing Jesus Christ as we now know Him, we had been able to remain with St. John at the foot of His cross when he was nailed to it! . . . Now, we have the happiness of assisting at the sacrifice of this same Victim, who is immolated under the appearances of bread and wine. Let us go, then, in spirit with the priest to this new Calvary; let us remain there with the angels and with all truly Christian souls to be sprinkled with the blood of the spotless Lamb.

When the priest has reached the time of communion, if we have not the happiness of com-

municating sacramentally it is a very holy practice to make a spiritual communion. It consists in the desire of a devout heart which sighs for the real reception of the Body of Jesus Christ. Then when the moment of communion has come we piously repeat with the priest these words of the centurion of the Gospel: *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed.* At the same time we produce in our soul a holy and earnest desire to receive our Saviour in sacramental communion, saying: *Deign, Lord, as soon as possible to nourish me with Thy vivifying flesh, that I may be filled with Thy life.*

During Mass we should pray with recollection and devotion. All prayers are good, and the Church prescribes none in particular. The faithful are accustomed to recite those which they find in an approved book, or to say the beads, or to meditate upon the mysteries of the Passion which the Mass recalls to them.

Though the Church does not oblige her children to hear Mass but on Sundays and holydays of obligation, she earnestly desires, nevertheless, that they also assist at it during the week. Nothing is more conformable to the Christian spirit than to hear Mass every day when our occupations permit us to do so, and nothing draws more abundantly the blessings

of God upon a family than to be daily represented at the divine Sacrifice by some of its members.

May we fully understand the treasure we possess in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and by a lively devotion abundantly gather therefrom consolations and graces all the days of our life!

CHAPTER XLVIII

PIETY.

Filius honorat patrem, et servus dominum suum ; si ergo pater ego sum, ubi est honor meus : et si Dominus ego sum, ubi est timor meus? (The son honoreth the father, and the servant his master ; if, then, I be a father, where is my honor ? and if I be master, where is my fear ?).—MALACH. i. 6.

PIETY is one of the most amiable virtues ; it attracts hearts by its charms, but it is to enrich them with its precious fruits. For, as St. Paul says, *Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8).

It is one of those virtues which are called the capital virtues, because they are the principal and source of many others. It consists properly in that *good disposition of the heart which makes us render to our heavenly Father the worship which is due Him.*

We speak evidently of religious piety, which is intimately allied to the virtue of religion and wholly analogous with filial piety ; this latter relates to our parents on earth and the former to our Father who is in heaven.

Filial piety perfects the heart of a child and

leads him to render his parents the devotion which he owes them—that is, that honorable love and respect to which we give the name of devotion. Filial piety is partly exterior and partly interior; it has its seat in the heart and its manifestations are without.

In like manner religious piety sanctifies the heart of the children of God; it inspires them with the interior and exterior homage of love and respect which they owe to their heavenly Father.

May we love this beautiful and touching virtue! May we always practise it as our title of Christian and Child of Mary requires!

I. *Love of piety.* Why should we love piety, desire it, and ardently seek it? Because of its excellence, of its necessity, and of the blessings it procures us.

First, an excellent virtue. It relates to God Himself, whom it regards not as a Master but as a Father. . . . It makes us children of God—that is, it renders our sentiments and conduct becoming children of God. . . . It renders us in this world like the angels of paradise—angels of piety. . . .

Second, a necessary virtue. Without it we are Christians and sodalists only in name. The spiritual life by which the Christian soul must live is impossible without piety, for piety is the bond of union between God and the soul—a

bond similar to that which unites the branch to the tree which nourishes it. The soul is the branch; God is the tree to which the branch must remain united to receive life and vigor. . . .

Third, a virtue fruitful in spiritual blessings. *Godliness*, says the apostle, *is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (1 Tim. iv. 8). Be pious and you will have a happy life here below and eternal happiness above. Be pious; your piety will preserve you from all shoals and will open to you all interior treasures. . . . Piety is a tree of life planted in the heart of the children of God to nourish them, and by nourishing to communicate to them the life which is proper to them—a holy and happy life. . . . The root of this tree is faith; its fruits form the magnificent variety of all other virtues, and we may apply to it these words of the wise man: *My odor is as the purest balm. I have stretched out my branches as the turpentine-tree, and my branches are of honor and grace. As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor; and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches* (Ecclus. xxiv. 21–23).

II. *Practices of piety.* What should our piety be? It should be vigorous, exemplary, and solid.

1st. Piety is vigorous when it is not languid

but full of ardor and hardy like a plant which has a strong root. The root of piety is faith—lively faith, a spirit of faith. *Faith*, says the holy Council of Trent, *is the beginning of the salvation of man, the foundation and root of all justification* (Sess. 6, chap. viii.)

2d. Exemplary piety is that which is an example at home and abroad; it is manifested in all that belongs to the worship of God. . . .

3d. Solid piety is not that which consists solely in a few exterior practices; it is at the same time interior and exterior, for these two parts rest upon and mutually sustain one another.

Interior piety consists particularly in the virtues of faith, confidence in God, and charity. . . . It is this interior fire which exercises its life and its activity without.

Exterior piety includes all the exercises of piety. These exercises are effects proceeding from the interior fire, and serving it in turn as fuel, without which it must be extinguished.

This is what our piety should be; we have its model in the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, . . . its source in the adorable Heart of her divine Son.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HUMILITY.

Qui se humiliaverit, exaltabitur (He that shall humble himself shall be exalted).—MATT. xxiii. 12.

HUMILITY is not only one of the capital virtues of the Christian; it is distinguished besides by a splendor equal to charity. Humility and charity are the two celestial poles about which the resplendent collection of virtues, like a starry heaven, revolves.

St. Bernard defines humility *a true knowledge of ourselves which makes us confess our baseness.* We may say, in other words, that the object of this virtue is to make us recognize all our baseness, and at the same time accept the place which belongs to us.

Thus humility has a double object: one the baseness of man—that is, his nothingness and his unworthiness—the other the place or condition which corresponds to this baseness; we must recognize the one and accept the other. Hence the two parts of humility, which are

called humility of the *intelligence* and humility of the *heart* or *will*.

Happy they who have seen the brilliancy of this inestimable pearl and desire to acquire it at any price!

Three practical considerations here present themselves on the subject of this precious virtue: Why must we love the virtue of humility? Upon what basis is it founded? How must we practise it?

I. *Love of humility*. We should love humility, first, because of the example of Jesus Christ, then because of the price and the great blessings which this virtue contains.

1st. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, loved and embraced humility—in His mortal life, from the crib of Bethlehem to Calvary; in His Church, which He calls His little flock, and which He desires always humble and lowly in spite of its growth; in His eucharistic life, remaining with us under the veil of the sacrament which we justly call not only the sacrament of His love but also the sacrament of his humility. . . .

2d. Humility is a treasure—a treasure of grace and peace. It is to the humble God gives His grace—grace to the mind, which He enlightens, . . . to the heart, which He enriches with all virtues, . . . particularly chastity. *It is humility*, says St. Bernard, *which merits*

charity—Ut castitas detur, humilitas meretur. It is just the contrary with pride: *God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace* (1 Pet. v. 5). The humble enjoy great peace: *Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). . . .

Humility is the condition and at the same time the measure of sanctity. If Christian perfection is an edifice to be constructed, humility is its foundation. The deeper this foundation, says St. Augustine, the higher the edifice can rise. . . .

Humility is a ladder by which we may ascend. *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* The true path of glory is that which Jesus Christ followed: *He humbled Himself, . . . for which cause God also hath exalted Him* (Philipp. ii. 8, 9). . . . A way which is easy and practicable to all; for if all have not the strength to ascend, who cannot humble himself and descend? . . .

II. *Foundation of humility.* Humility is founded upon a true knowledge of ourselves. The man who is penetrated with this knowledge, instead of elevating himself above what he is or arrogating to himself a greatness which he has not, keeps his true place and the rank God has assigned him among beings.

The knowledge of myself is of three kinds:

the knowledge of my nothingness, the knowledge of my unworthiness before God, the knowledge of my littleness and my weakness.

1st. The knowledge of my nothingness. Of myself I am nothing more than I was from all eternity, and which I would have remained for all eternity if God had not called me into existence—that is, nothingness, pure nothingness. Now that I exist through the goodness of God, my Creator, what am I but this same nothingness clothed with existence and other benefits of God? Yes, all that I am, all that I have, is a gift of God: *What have you*, says the apostle, *that you have not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). In nothing may I glorify myself, but I must use all that I have to pay my debt of gratitude to my sovereign Benefactor. . . .

This is what was done in the most perfect manner by her who exclaimed in the ecstasy of her humility: *My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid* (Luke i. 46–48).

2d. Knowledge of my unworthiness. That which renders me unworthy, positively odious, in the sight of God is my sins. If I had committed but one venial sin it would suffice to make me worthy of being trampled under foot by everybody. . . . If I have committed one mortal sin I have merited hell and lowered my-

self to the rank of the demons. . . . If I have committed mortal sin more than once my place is beneath the demons: they committed but one mortal sin. . . .

3d. Knowledge of my littleness and weakness. All that is good in me, either in the order of nature or grace, may be reduced to very little. . . . And to accomplish the least good, to take the least step in the way of salvation, I have constant need of the assistance of divine grace, like a little child who cannot walk without its mother's hand to guide and support it.

III. *Exercise of humility.* The exercise of humility includes principally three things: never to exalt one's self, never to complain, never to withdraw one's self from the feet of the Saviour.

1st. Never to exalt one's self. We must be watchful never to exalt ourselves in thought by nourishing great ideas of ourselves, of our ability, of our knowledge; . . . by preferring ourselves to our neighbor, by preferring our opinions, sentiments to those of others; . . . nor by desires—aspiring to elevated positions, seeking to be seen; . . . nor by words—boasting of what we are or what we do; by excusing ourselves either in the confessional or elsewhere; by imposing our opinions on others; by speaking in a positive, imperious tone, always assuming ourselves to be in the right; . . . nor by actions—doing our good works to be seen by

men; or with a sort of claim upon the consideration of God, as if we rendered God a needed service, while it is a favor He does us in permitting us to serve His divine Majesty. The Saviour here tells us our true position in these words: *When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which we ought to do* (Luke xvii. 10). And elsewhere He tells us: *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* (John xv. 16).

2d. Not to complain either of humiliations, or labors, or trials, or corrections, . . . but to ever say in the depth of our hearts: I have deserved more.

3d. Not to withdraw ourselves from the feet of the Saviour, but to ever remain there prostrate in spirit—1st, to ask mercy and pardon; 2d, to unceasingly implore the divine assistance, since without it we can absolutely do nothing: *Without me*, says our Saviour, *nothing is possible*. . . .

As a means of attaining to the perfect practice of humility it is also very profitable to know the maxims of this virtue; the occupations and circumstances in which we should particularly exercise it; and, finally, the source whence we must draw it, which is no other than the divine Heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER L.

PATIENCE.

In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestris (In your patience you shall possess your souls).—LUKE xxi. 19.

WE may say that patience is the characteristic virtue of the Christian, as the cross, the symbol of patience, is his distinctive mark. It is solid virtue *par excellence;* it sustains all the others and gives them strength and constancy. Therefore it is an indispensable necessity, as our Saviour teaches us, saying: *In your patience you shall possess your souls;* and the apostle, writing to the Hebrews: *Patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise* (Hebr. x. 36).

To better form ourselves to a virtue so important let us consider its value and its practice.

I. Value of patience. It is the most precious virtue to Jesus Christ, since He embraced it from His birth and made it His inseparable companion during all the course of his life to His last sigh. It depended only upon Himself

to lead a tranquil life free from suffering. Not being subject to sin, he did not need, like us, to be subject to the trials of life; but through choice, through preference, He willed to suffer during all the time of His sojourn upon earth. When was He without suffering or trial? Is there any kind of tribulation which He did not endure? Is there any bitterness He did not taste? *He shall drink*, says the prophet, *of the torrent in the way.* All these trials, all these labors, all this bitterness He endured without complaint or murmur, without sadness, with a constancy, a resignation, a serenity, and a joy truly divine. Behold a perfect model of patience for all ages.

2d. If the Son of God has given us such an example it is sufficient to show us the excellence of this virtue; but it will appear to us still more precious and more attractive if we consider the great blessings it procures us.

It gives us a resemblance to Christ. If the disciple must resemble his master, is it not the cross which shall imprint upon the Christian a character of resemblance with his crucified Master? Yes, it is through holy patience that we must be *conformed*, as the apostle says, to the *image of the Son of God*—that is, we must be like Him, first in suffering, then in glory.

Patience makes us powerful in word and work. *The patient man is better than the val-*

iant; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities (Prov. xvi. 32). Patience more than any other virtue spreads that good odor of Jesus Christ which gains souls. The Saviour overcame the world by the cross, by patience; and in the same way His disciples must win all their victories and bring forth fruit: *They bring forth fruit in patience* (Luke viii. 15).

It purifies the soul. Suffering endured for Jesus Christ becomes penance and expiation. Now, is it not in the salutary waters of penance and suffering that we must wash the stains of our souls? Are they not the mysterious bath in which the elect have whitened their robes? *They have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14).

It enriches us with virtues and merits. The cross is a tree upon which blossom charity, sweetness, and all virtues; a tree the branches of which produce fruits of honor and glory. *For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor. iv. 17). *I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18).

It renders us happy—happy in this life, happier still in the next. Do you desire peace,

true happiness? Here is the secret of it, as revealed to us by the pious author of the *Imitation: Thy peace shall be in much patience. In the cross is salvation; in the cross is infusion of sweetness; in the cross is joy of spirit. When thou shalt arrive thus far that tribulation becomes sweet and savory to thee for love of Christ, then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth* (*Imit.*, b. iii. chap. xxv.; b. ii. chap. xii.) And has not the Saviour said: *Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake?* (Matt. v. 5, 10).

Your sorrow, He says again, *shall be turned into joy* (John xvi. 20). We shall share the glory of the divine Master in proportion as we shall have shared His sufferings: *If we suffer with Him we may be also glorified with Him* (Rom. viii. 17).

II. Practice of patience. Our patience must be Christian. Christian patience consists not only in faithfully enduring sufferings and trials, but in bearing them virtuously for God, to observe His holy law.

There are men who suffer with courage, that they may not aggravate their woes by impatience; others because they must yield to necessity and of two evils choose the least; others to satisfy a passion, to obtain some temporal advantage. This is a worldly, pagan,

Stoical, and purely human patience. On the other side there are also those who suffer for God, for their sins, in view of eternal blessings in union with Christ crucified; this is Christian patience. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross*, says the apostle (Gal. ii. 19).

Christian patience is a continual daily exercise. Everything is matter for patience: duties to be fulfilled, labors to be maintained; persons with whom we live, with whom we have to do; inconveniences, infirmities, temptations. . . . Everything in this world furnishes matter for patience to him who wishes to live Christianly and according to God in all things.

Christian patience is not difficult when we fix our eyes upon our suffering Jesus. *See*, exclaimed St. Magdalen of Pazzi, *what the Son of God endured for my salvation! Could I complain when I have before my eyes the sufferings of a crucified God?*

St. Theresa suffered with so much happiness that she could not live without suffering. This admirable patience she drew from three sources: from the thought of her sins and hell, from the thought of paradise, and from the thought of Jesus crucified. . . . Let us add that we shall draw it also from the adorable Heart of Jesus, and from that of Mary, His holy Mother, which was pierced with a sword of grief.

CHAPTER LI.

THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS.

Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram (Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land).—MATT. v. 4.

HERE is one of the most attractive virtues of Christianity—the virtue of meekness, gentleness. It consists in an unalterable tranquillity of heart mingled with goodness and love—a tranquillity which remains unmoved in the midst of the most irritating contradictions. When it abides in the heart it diffuses over the countenance a perpetual serenity which no cloud of sadness or anger can darken. *Blessed are the meek*, says the Saviour, *for they shall possess the land.*

Then let us love meekness; let us endeavor to practise it more and more. To this end let us consider the excellence of this virtue and the manner in which we should practise it.

I. Excellence of meekness. This virtue was so dear to Jesus Christ that it caused Him to receive from the prophets the name of Lamb. *Send forth, O Lord*, said Isaias, *the lamb, the*

ruler of the earth (Isaias xvi. 1). *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearers* (Isaias liii. 7). The principal figure which represented Him was the paschal lamb: *Christ our pasch is sacrificed* (1 Cor. v. 7). *Behold the Lamb of God*, said St. John the Baptist, seeing Jesus coming to him, *behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world* (John i. 29).

He desires that His disciples resemble Him, that they be lambs like their Master: *Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves* (Luke x. 3). And confiding to St. Peter the government of His church, He says: *Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.*

Meekness is a virtue which He most earnestly recommends to us; *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). *You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other* (Matt. v. 38, 39).

Meekness produces the most precious fruits. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.* They shall possess the land; they shall be masters of all the land, like the most powerful kings, for they shall win all hearts. Such was Moses, the meekest of the men of his day: *He was loved of God and men*, says the Holy Spirit (Ecclus. xlv. 1). What power did not

the meekness of the admirable St. Francis of Sales exercise over souls! Meekness, said this great doctor, is a heavenly honey which attracts souls. . . . We may also say that it is a holy oil which penetrates and softens the hardest hearts; or a rampart of wool which blunts the force of the most violent projectiles. *A mild answer breaketh wrath, says the wise man, but a harsh word stirreth up fury* (Prov. xv. 1).

Meekness accomplishes all things, renders all things easy, practises all virtues with facility, according to the words of St. Leo: *There is nothing difficult to the humble, nothing hard and vexatious to meek and tractable minds.*

Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. But how are we to acquire meekness? How are we to practise this beautiful virtue?

II. Practice. 1st. We must endeavor to practise it in the daily occasions which we encounter.

Thus, to avoid all hardness, all impatience with others—with friends and enemies, with those who contradict or importune us, with our inferiors or superiors, with ourselves, our disposition, our own weaknesses. . . . To avoid all impatience or brusqueness in our labors, our infirmities, our sufferings. . . .

2d. To watch over ourselves, that moderation and meekness may constantly reign in our actions and our proceedings, in our words, in our

very silence, and particularly in our hearts. The heart should be pure of all bitterness and breathe only kindness and meekness. This calm and friendly meekness of heart shines in the countenance and diffuses throughout the whole exterior a cordiality which charms and captivates souls.

To personal efforts must be added succor from on high. We must go to Jesus as the source of all virtues; we must draw sweetness from His divine Heart. *Learn of me*, He says, *because I am meek and humble of heart.* By joining meekness with humility He gives us to understand that if we are humble we shall have no difficulty in practising meekness.

Let us go, then, to His divine Heart, which overflows with the sweetest unction. *Oh! how good and sweet*, exclaims the wise man, *is thy Spirit, O Lord, in all things* (Wis. xii. 1).

Let us go to Him in His Passion, where, like the olive crushed in the press, He gives forth floods of the sweetest oil; let us go to Him in the Holy Eucharist, where He personally manifests all the marvels of meekness and promises at the same time that all who hunger and thirst for justice shall be filled.

CHAPTER LII.

STRENGTH AND COURAGE.

Confortare et viriliter age (Take courage, act manfully).—1 PARAL. xxii. 13.

HERE is the virtue of noble hearts: the virtue of courage, strength of soul—the courage which knows neither fear nor defeat. Nothing is more beautiful than that manly courage, and energy which endures labor and suffering, despises ridicule and affronts, and triumphs over all obstacles to fulfil a duty and to do good. But for the true Christian, who desires to attain the blessed end of his destiny, the virtue of courage is as necessary as it is noble and beautiful. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12). To arm all His disciples with this courage our Saviour instituted a special sacrament—Confirmation.

Then let us love this virtue and try to acquire it more and more. To this end it will be profitable to thoroughly know its nature and how to practise it.

I. Nature of the virtue of courage. Courage

is the virtue of heroes, of martyrs, and of great men.

1st. We call heroes those intrepid and generous soldiers who, armed for their king and country, know no fear, and, undaunted by labor or sacrifice, count it a privilege to shed their blood on the field of battle.

The more just the war the greater the courage and energy of the true hero. Now, a war is waging for the greatest and most just cause: it is the war of Jesus Christ against Satan and sin, and the things at stake are heaven and hell. This noble combat requires heroism, strength of soul, to combat the enemies who harass us on all sides: *Put you on the armor of God,* says the apostle, *that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places* (Eph. vi. 11, 12).

2d. Courage is the virtue of the martyrs—a virtue which causes them to triumph over torments and the terrors of death. We are astonished at the incredible constancy of innumerable Christians in the midst of torture—the constancy of weak virgins, tender children, which no invention of the persecutors can overcome. How were they able to suffer thus? They armed themselves with the virtue of

courage and were invincible through the Holy Spirit.

3d. Courage is the virtue of all great men. A great man is one who accomplishes great things, endures great trials, or triumphs over great obstacles for truth and justice, for the good of his fellow-men. Among all the great men who shine in history there is one who eclipses all others; it is He who is called the King of glory. *Who is this King of glory?* exclaims the prophet, and he is answered: *The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle* (Ps. xxiii. 8).

When I see him in His Passion, calm and meek, opening not His mouth while His enemies exhausted against Him every effort of hatred, iniquity, calumny, contempt, outrage, cruelty; when I see Him preserving His divine serenity even unto death, which He endured for His very persecutors, He seems like a rock in the midst of the sea, against which the foaming waves spend all their fury in vain.

All true Christians must struggle and suffer, after the example of Christ, their King and their Chief. *The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me they will persecute you* (John xv. 20). Yes, *all*, says the apostle, *that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. iii. 12), if not unto shedding their blood, at least through trials

and temptations which are inseparable from a truly Christian life.

II. Practice. How are we to acquire and practise this beautiful virtue?

1st. We must free ourselves from the contrary vices—human respect, sloth, indolence. If courage is the virtue of noble hearts, indolence, sloth, and human respect are the marks of cowardly, servile souls.

The slave of human respect gives up his dearest liberty—liberty of conscience; the first libertine he meets may rule him with a smile. As a Christian he should fulfil his duties: hear Mass on Sunday, frequent the sacraments, observe the law of abstinence and fasting, refrain from reading wicked journals. . . . His conscience tells him this, and he would like to obey his conscience; but he is afraid—afraid of passing for a weak mind, . . . never dreaming that this fear is weakness and the most shameful cowardice. . . .

Sloth, sensual pleasures enervate the soul and render it incapable of sustaining combats, labors, sufferings. The victorious Hannibal was overcome by the enervating climate of Capua.

Sloth is a shameful and degrading vice. The heart which it rules is like a stagnant pond in which all kinds of disgusting reptiles breed. . . .

2d. The principle of Christian courage is faith. *If you have faith as a grain of mustard-*

seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from thence thither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you (Matt. xvii. 19). The just, St. Paul tells us, *by faith conquered kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, became valiant in battle, put to flight the armies of foreigners* (Heb. xi. 33, 34).

Faith strengthens us by penetrating us with the great thoughts of death and eternity. . . .

3d. Another principle of strength is prayer. This holy exercise unites us with God and causes us to share the courage of the Almighty. *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you* (John xv. 7). It was He who caused St. Paul to say: *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13).

If, then, we desire to grow in Christian courage and walk in the path of heroes and great men, we must be penetrated with the great truths of faith and unite prayer to practice; on one side trample under foot human respect; on the other side labor and combat, place all our confidence in God, and assiduously pray to Him. Moreover, as Children of Mary we shall be armed with an invincible courage by her who crushed the serpent's head and who appeared to the world and hell terrible as an army in battle array: *Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata* (Cant. vi. 9).

CHAPTER LIII.

MORTIFICATION.

Mortificate membra vestra, quæ sunt super terram (Mortify your members which are upon earth).—COLOSS. iii. 5.

MORTIFICATION is a virtue the object of which is to repress the irregular inclinations of nature, to subject the inferior man to the superior man, the flesh to the spirit. This is the meaning of the apostle's words: *Mortificate membra vestra, quæ sunt super terram*—Mortify your members which are upon earth; make the earthly man die within you.

The virtue of mortification differs from the virtue of *penance*, the object of which is not to subject the flesh to the spirit, but to repair the injury done to God by sin. It differs also from abnegation, of which the proper act is the abandonment of created things, the renouncement of all that is not God, in order to attach the heart to God alone and to God's good pleasure.

The virtue of mortification occupies a great place in the Christian life. It should be a con-

tinual practice; it is an instrument which we should have ever at hand in the work of sanctification. Let us try to understand well a virtue so important, and also how necessary, how precious it is, and how we should practise it.

I. Necessity of mortification. To comprehend the necessity of mortification it suffices to consider Jesus Christ and to consider ourselves.

1st. Let us consider Jesus Christ; let us hear what He tells us Himself as well as by the mouths of His apostles. *He said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me* (Luke ix. 23). *Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal* (John xii. 24, 25). *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon earth* (Coloss. iii. 5). *They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences* (Gal. v. 24).

Let us hear also how He speaks to us by His example: *Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps* (1 Pet. ii. 21). *With Christ I am nailed to the cross* (Gal. ii. 19). *We always bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies* (2 Cor. iv. 10).

Should we not imitate this example? As Christians can we live in sloth—be delicate members of a head crowned with thorns? Are we of better condition than our Master and Lord, than the apostles and saints? . . .

2d. Let us consider ourselves as Christians, as sodalists, as Children of Mary.

As Christians mortification is a necessity for us—1st, to overcome our passions and re-establish the harmony of our nature, disturbed by sin. Reason should command and not obey the senses. *There is an evil that I have seen under the sun*, says the wise man: *I have seen servants upon horses; and princes walking on the ground as servants* (Ecclus. x. 5, 7). 2d. To expiate our sins. Are we not all sinners? Is it not better to expiate our faults in this life than in the other? . . . 3d. To faithfully observe the law of God and avoid sin in future. Mortification is the knife with which we cut off our vices as the vine-dresser cuts off the bad branches. . . .

As Children of Mary mortification is equally necessary for us, in order to attain the perfection which the Mother of God asks of us. Whoever would advance in the way of virtue and form himself to Christian perfection needs mortification, as the sculptor needs a chisel, the builder a hammer, the boatman oars to go up the stream. . . .

II. Fruits. Precious effects of mortification. Christian mortification causes the old man to die within us, the sensual and carnal man, to use the words of St. Paul; it weakens and destroys the life of sin, and at the same time creates and fortifies this new life in Jesus Christ, which is made manifest in our bodies and our senses: *That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.*

Now, in what does this new life consist?

1st. In a lively faith, immovable confidence, pure and ardent charity. . . .

2d. In a spirit of prayer. It is only by passing through the altar of holocausts, as St. Augustine says, that we reach the altar of perfumes, the symbol of prayer. . . .

3d. In future glory. *So if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him* (Rom. viii. 17). *He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory* (Phil. iii. 21).

III. Practice of mortification. To practise mortification well we must remove its great obstacle—fear, apprehension. Christian mortification is not so difficult as we think; it is softened by the unction of divine grace. The world sees the thorns, says St. Bernard, but not the unction and balm of Jesus Christ which accompanies them. Let us keep the example of the Saviour and of all the saints before our

eyes, and soon we shall walk with ease in this divinely marked way; it is only the first steps which cost.

2d. Let us apply ourselves not only to exterior mortification but also to interior mortification—to mortifying self-love, our own will, our tastes, and our humor. . . . These two parts of mortification, one interior, the other exterior, mutually complete and sustain each other.

3d. Let us proceed by degrees: first, practise the mortifications and impose upon ourselves the sacrifices necessary to avoid faults and sins; second, impose upon ourselves the sacrifices indispensable to the proper fulfilment of all our duties; third, impose upon ourselves those required by circumstances, in order to properly endure trials and crosses.

4th. It is profitable also to impress upon our minds the maxims of the saints concerning mortification—namely: *Conquer thyself. Be master of thy heart. Not what is pleasing, but what is right. The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make* (*Imit.*, i. 25).

CHAPTER LIV.

TEMPERANCE.

Carissimi, sobrii estote et vigilate (Be sober and watch).—1 PET. v. 8.

EMPERANCE, the fourth of the cardinal virtues, is that noble and beautiful virtue which subjects to the empire of reason the appetites of our concupiscence, particularly in the matter of food and drink.

This virtue is earnestly recommended to us by the Holy Spirit in many parts of the Scriptures; therefore we should love it and apply ourselves to practise it constantly and to practise it in its perfection.

To this end let us consider the value of temperance, its necessity and its practice.

I. Value. Temperance is a precious virtue in the eyes of God, and it procures man inestimable blessings for soul and body.

If we wish to see the value God attaches to temperance we have only to open the Holy Scriptures. From the very beginning, when He willed to exercise the obedience of our first parents, He gave them a command enjoin-

ing temperance: *Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, He said to them, *thou shalt not eat* (Gen. ii. 17). He said to the mother of Samson, by the ministry of an angel: *Beware and drink no wine nor strong drink, because thou shalt conceive and bear a son who shall be consecrated to God* (Judges xiii. 4, 5). Later the archangel Gabriel said to Zachary: *The son that shall be born to thee shall be great before the Lord, and shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost* (Luke i. 15).

The Saviour began His public life by fast and abstinence, and He resisted the spirit of gluttony with these great words: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God* (Matt. iv. 4). *Woe to you*, He says later, *who are filled*, and who refuse nothing to your appetites; *for you shall hunger* (Luke vi. 25) and thirst in eternal torments, where you will ask in vain for a drop of water to cool your tongue. *Take heed to yourselves*, He adds, *lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life; and that day* (the day of judgment) *come upon you suddenly* (Luke xxi. 34).

Temperance is a principle of corporal well-being. It is the greatest safeguard of health, and maintains the body, the soul's instrument, in a perfect state, ready and disposed to fulfil all its functions. *Sober drinking is health to soul*

and body (Ecclus. xxxi. 37). *By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate shall prolong life* (Ecclus. xxxvii. 34). *Wine drunken with excess raiseth quarrels, and wrath, and many ruins* (Ecclus. xxxi. 38).

Temperance is a source of spiritual advantages. It frees us from the sad effects of intemperance, . . . of which the Israelites in the desert offer us a striking example. *The people*, says the Scripture, *sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play, to dance before the golden calf which they had made their god* (Exod. xxxii. 6).

It preserves the soul in a happy state of spiritual health, which consists in sanctifying grace, in fervor, in empire over the senses and the passions, in the vigor of the faculties of the mind, of the understanding, of the will, in the power to easily apply ourselves to things above. *Corporal fast*, the Church tells us, *represses the sallies of vice, raises the mind to heaven, enriches us with virtues and rewards.*

II. Necessity of temperance. Temperance is necessary to preserve chastity. *Be not drunk with wine, which contains luxury* (Eph. v. 18). The lily of purity only flourishes among thorns, *nor is it found in the land of them that live in delights* (Job xxviii. 13). *Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and idleness* (Ezech. xvi. 49).

Temperance is necessary to overcome our passions. *He that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn* (Prov. xxix. 21). *Bridle gluttony*, says the author of the *Imitation, and thou shalt the easier restrain all carnal inclinations* (b. i. 19).

Temperance is necessary because we must pray well, and the mind weighed down by sensuality cannot rise to heavenly things nor give itself to prayer: *The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. ii. 14). He, on the contrary, who makes a sober use of corporal things acquires that serenity, that purity of heart, to which is promised the sight of God and blessings from above. . . .

III. To practise temperance we must know its rules and maxims.

1st. The Christian is contented with what is necessary and does not seek what is superfluous. *Having food and wherewith to be covered*, says the apostle, *with these we are content* (1 Tim. vi. 8).

2d. Food was created to renew our strength, and not to satisfy sensuality.

3d. The body is the instrument of the soul; it is made to obey the soul in the accomplishment of all its duties; we must nourish it soberly to preserve its promptness and its pliability without surfeiting and enervating it.

4th. We must use food prudently, as a medi-

cal remedy to preserve life and renew our strength. *Thou hast taught me, Lord,* says St. Augustine, *to take my corporal nourishment as necessary medicine.*

5th. We must prescribe for ourselves a rule regulated by reason, and beware of giving rein to our natural appetite by permitting it to fully satisfy itself.

6th. The true measure of temperance is not blind appetite . . . nor the quantity of mental labor, . . . but the real needs of nature attested by wise experience.

7th. *Nature,* say the wise, *is contented with little:* thus very little oil is needed to feed a lamp, to facilitate the movement of a wheel. *In doubt let there be rather less than more.* What we leave does us more good than what we take in delicacies. *Wisdom dwells in sobriety.* It is by employing these means that all the saints learned to practise the precious virtue of temperance; we have but to employ them in our turn to succeed like them. This happy result will be all the more easily obtained that we shall be seconded by the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, our Mother.

CHAPTER LV.

CHASTITY.

O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate! (Oh! how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory).—Wis. iv. 1.

THE most beautiful, the most amiable of virtues, the characteristic virtue of the Children of Mary and the most brilliant pearl on their brow, is the virtue of chastity.

May we love this virtue as the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, loves it! May we ever preserve it in all its splendor! To this end let us consider, first, the excellence of chastity, then what is its safeguard.

I. Excellence. The excellence of chastity consists in the ravishing beauty of the virtue and the inestimable advantages it procures.

1st. The Holy Spirit Himself extols chastity in the most exalted terms: *How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men* (Wis. iv. 1).

The Son of God made man has manifested a marked predilection for this virtue; not only

did He choose for His Mother the purest of virgins, but He desired that all who were to touch His humanity, or draw near to His sacred person should be pure and virginal. His foster-father, His precursor, His beloved disciple, the priesthood of the new law which He instituted to offer His eucharistic body, all appear before us resplendent in virginal purity. *He feedeth among the lilies*, says the prophet (Cant. vi. 2). He is that Lamb without stain which St. John beheld on Mount Sion: *With him there were an hundred and forty-four thousand, . . . and they sung a new canticle before the throne; no man could say the canticle but those, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. xiv. 1–4).

This beautiful virtue, then, has a charm which enraptures the heart of God.

3d. Chastity elevates the soul to an incomparable dignity: it makes it the spouse of God. Ah! how joyous will be the nuptials of a soul with such a Spouse.

4th. Chastity elevates man above his nature and makes him *like the angels of God* (Matt. xxii. 30). The angels, like chaste souls, see God and the things of heaven; they burn with pure flames of charity; they accomplish with promptness, undeterred by any obstacle, all the will of God. . . .

St. Bernard goes so far as to place a chaste

man above the angels, because of the courage he must exert to attain a virtue which the angels possess by nature. The latter, he says, are more fortunate in having received a perfect purity; a chaste man has more merit in having sustained the greatest combats.

5th. Chastity makes us fruitful in virtues and good works; . . . it powerfully helps us to win souls to God. . . .

II. Safeguard of chastity. To preserve intact the virtue of chastity and bring it to its highest perfection we must, 1st, be penetrated with the frailty of man, particularly in this respect. It is in this sense more than any other that we must say: *I am man, and there is no human misery into which I may not fall.* Were you purer than an angel you are always clothed in corruptible flesh, and a simple imprudence may suffice to plunge you into the mire.

2d. We must love chastity, love it as the most precious of treasures, and add to this love a horror of the contrary sin, and even a horror of all that could lead to impurity.

Impurity is a vice which the tongues of all people call infamous—a dishonorable, debasing vice which degrades man and drags him lower than the brute; a vice which leads its slaves into sacrileges and innumerable sins; a vice of which it is extremely difficult to amend; a vice which induces blindness, hardness, de-

spair, and which ruins the greatest number of souls. . . . Does this suffice to give us a horror of it?

3d. We must fly dangerous occasions—dissolute companions, licentious reading, immoral plays, idleness, intemperance, familiarity with persons of another sex; these are the most usual shoals upon which chastity is wrecked. . . .

4th. We must employ the means; they are summed up in humility, mortification, prayer. These means correspond to the triple symbol of the lily which we find in different parts of the Scriptures: the lily of the valley, the lily among thorns, and the lily in the midst of the fields, where it is inundated with the dew of heaven—an image of grace, which prayers cause to descend in abundance from heaven.

Under the name of prayer we must understand not only assiduous prayer and pious invocations at the time of danger, . . . but also frequenting the sacraments, as well as a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. . . .

By employing these means, after the example of the saints and all good Christians, we shall preserve, like them, the inestimable treasure of purity, and we shall go through this world keeping our souls unspotted from its corruption.

CHAPTER LVI.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

Si oculus tuus fuerit simplex, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit (If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome). —MATT. vi. 22.

THE eye of the soul, of which the Saviour here speaks, is the intention with which we act, the end we have in view, the motive of our actions. This motive is justly called the eye of the soul, since it is a torch which enlightens and guides the soul. *If thy eye be single*, if thy intention be pure and upright, with no other object but God and His will, *thy whole body will be lightsome*, all thy conduct, all thy actions will be holy and share in the true light, which is God.

This sentence alone of Jesus Christ's suffices to make us comprehend how important it is to always act with purity of intention. Now, what is purity of intention, and how is it acquired?

1. What is purity of intention? The intention is pure when it is not mingled with or infected with views of self-love. This is the case

when we look only at God, when we make His divine will our sole object and do not fall back upon our own interests. This purity has degrees; when it is directed towards heaven, like a flame without smoke, it is confounded with pure charity, disinterested love. Alas! this degree of perfection is too rarely encountered. *For*, as the apostle says, *all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's* (Phil. ii. 21).

2d. *Purity of intention* supposes uprightness and simplicity. The intention is upright when we proceed frankly, without seeking to deceive ourselves; when we act in good faith, doing all that we can to know and follow the truth. Simplicity of intention excludes all multiplicity; it does not give itself to several objects, but to one, which is God; and even in God it considers but His glory, His good pleasure, the accomplishment of His will. Not that a man actuated by this simplicity of purpose does not desire also certain created things, such as health, the necessities of life, success in business; but he desires them in a manner secondary and subordinate to the will of God, which is the principal term, the absolute end of his life.

3d. This perfect purity of intention gives great value to our works. The least action done purely for God is of more value than the most difficult labor, however important in ap-

pearance, if there be in it the least mixture of self-interest.

4th. A man actuated by this upright intention always enjoys the testimony of a good conscience, and that serenity, that interior peace, which all the riches of the world cannot give. And since he lives for God alone, God, in His turn, overwhelms him with His most precious favors. . .

Such is the nature, such is the price of purity of intention. But what must we do to acquire it?

II. How to acquire purity of intention.

1st. We must, once for all, offer our whole life to God. If I seriously reflect that I have but one life; that I can live this life but once, that I can never recommence it; that, having but one life, I consequently cannot let it be barren, but must make it bring forth fruit, to which I must give all its value, that later I may rejoice in it for all eternity—then I have no difficulty in comprehending that to make my life most beautiful, most noble, as perfect as possible, I must offer it entirely to God and His service This holy offering consists in placing ourselves in God's hands, that He may govern us according to His will in all things, saying with St. Paul: *Lord, what wilt thou that I do?* . . .

2d. To watch over the affections of our heart,

the desires and passions, which are sometimes hidden and rule us unconsciously. *That seems often to be charity*, says the author of the *Imitation, which is rather natural affection ; because our own natural inclination, self-will, hope of retribution, desire of our own interest will be seldom wanting* (*Imit.* i. 15). According as we perceive in our intention something human, self-seeking, we have only to disavow it and reject it. . . .

3d. Every time we encounter a trial to be endured, a disagreeable duty to be fulfilled, an occasion, a word ungratifying to self-love, we must accept this trial, this work, whatever it may be, all the more willingly that it is an action wholly pure in the eyes of God, without any mixture of self-love.

4th. To frequently renew our good intention, saying, for example: *All for Jesus ! For Thee alone, O my God ! For the greater glory of God !* It is not necessary, however, that we have for each one of our actions an explicit and marked intention, nor to say, I am doing this for such a motive; it suffices to offer in the morning the whole day to God by a general resolution to do His holy will in all things.

Happy for us if we succeed in having this pure and upright intention, this simple view of God in all our actions! Then our life shall be wholly a life of grace and light—*totum corpus lucidum erit.*

CHAPTER LVII.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

In capite libri scriptum est de me : Ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam (In the head of the book it is written of me : That I should do thy will, O God !)—HEB. x. 7.

THE holy will of God, the constant fulfilment of this divine will, or, as we are accustomed to call it, conformity to the will of God, is a virtue which we may say is the summary of all virtues, the abridgment of all sanctity. In fact, what does God wish but the sanctification of His creatures? And is it not the most sublime sanctity for which the Saviour causes us to ask in these beautiful words of the Our Father: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?*

Then let us endeavor to acquire an ever-increasing conformity to the divine will; and to better succeed therein let us consider the nature, the excellence, the practice of this virtue.

I. Nature. What is conformity to the divine will?

1st. It is a virtue which consists, as the name indicates, in discerning the will of God in all things, and in adopting this holy will in a manner to make it our own. Hence results a perfect accord between God and the creature; so that the mark by which we may recognize whether we possess the virtue of which we speak is *to will or not to will what God wishes or does not wish—to will all that He wills and as He wills it.*

2d. After what we have just said conformity to the will of God includes at the same time an act of the intelligence and an act of the will: the intelligence recognizes the divine will, the will loves and accepts it.

This knowledge and this love of the divine will imply a double principle, a double truth, which reason and faith reveal to us.

1st. All that happens to us in this world happens by the will of God, in this sense: that God at least permits it and tolerates it. Evil itself and sin would not exist if God, in His impenetrable designs, did not permit them. Before we act we have to see what God asks of us, either to prevent an evil or bring about success; but once the event is accomplished we must consider the material fact as the expression of the divine will, to which we must unite ours.

The second truth which we assume is that God, being the best of fathers, wills only our

good, and that in all that He permits regarding us He has only our salvation in view. I can, then, and I should, on my part make everything that happens to me here below tend to my salvation, according to the words of the apostle: *To them that love God all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28).

3d. The matter, the subject, of our conformity to the will of God is threefold—sin, duty, suffering. We must fly all that God forbids, accomplish all that He ordains, accept the trials He imposes upon us, the tribulations which we encounter by permission of His ever-adorable providence. . . .

It is easy to see that this is a vast subject, that it extends to all our life, and that every moment we must practise conformity to the will of God—a great advantage, if we consider the excellence of this virtue.

II. Excellence. Nothing is more just, more wise, more holy than to conform our will in all things to that of the Lord our God.

1st. Is He not the supreme Master whom all must obey? Is he not the supreme Monarch of the universe, who bears upon His brow an eternal diadem? Then must we not in all that He wills, in every event, bow before Him, saying: *It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight?* (1 Kings iii. 18). Is He not also an infinitely just Judge, who must punish sin and

make us expiate our iniquities? . . . At the same time, in exercising His justice He does not cease to be a father. *Such as I love*, He says, *I chastise* (Apoc. iii. 19).

2d. The will of God, ever directed by His supreme wisdom, is a most sure rule of right; then is it not the highest wisdom to follow it? God is a Father as infinitely wise as He is infinitely good; He knows our wants, He knows what is suitable for us, what would be advantageous or injurious—health, success, or humiliation; and even though His dispositions seem to us an evil, we are certain that He disposes all things with power, sweetness, and love, for our true good.

Would we have peace and happiness? The secret is contained in conformity to the will of God. What is the cause of all our trials and of all the troubles which disturb us? It is that things go contrary to our desires and to our will. Now, if our will be united to that of God there is nothing to contradict it; it is always satisfied, it always has what it desires. And what could it desire better than the will of God? . . . Here, then, we discover true happiness, true peace—in conformity to the will of God! It is, moreover, the verification of those words: *Peace on earth to men of good will.*

This is not to say that the crosses and bitter-

ness of this life are in nowise felt, but the bitterness, the crosses, the trials are clouds which do not reach the summit of the holy mountain, darkness which cannot penetrate into the intimate sanctuary of the soul inseparably united to the divine will.

Have you a cross? asks St. Francis of Sales. Make your will one with that of God and the cross will disappear. Does something displease you? Look at it as the will of God and it will appear agreeable to you. . . . He who wishes but the good pleasure of God is always content and tranquil, like a statue in its niche. If a statue could speak it would say that it in nowise wished to be anywhere but in the niche where its master had placed it, and where he was pleased to see it.

3d. Is there anything more holy than the divine will? Ever tending essentially to the purest glory of God, this adorable will is the rule of all perfection, of all sanctity, of every well-regulated will. Man's will, then, shall be holy, shall be perfect, in proportion as it is in accord with that of God. On the other hand, nothing is so holy and meritorious as the homage we render God by submitting our will to His; it is the sacrifice of that which is dearest to us, our liberty, which we place in the hands of Him who gave it to us—a sacrifice so precious in His eyes that He prefers it to all holocausts, as He

testifies by saying: *Præbe, filimi, cor tuum mihi*—My son, give me thy heart (Prov. xxiii. 26).

Does not man's supreme perfection consist in being what God wishes him—being a man according to His heart? *I have found*, He says, speaking of David, *a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills* (Acts xiii. 22).

Is it not the summit of perfection to do God's will on earth, as the angels do it in heaven, as we daily ask in these words: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven?*

Is it not, moreover, what the example of Jesus Christ and all the saints shows us? *I came down from heaven*, says the Saviour, *not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me* (John vi. 38). The holy martyrs Epictetus and Astius in the midst of their torments unceasingly cried: *We are Christians. Lord Jesus, may Thy will be done in us!* This cry represents the sentiments of all the saints.

III. Practice. It is not difficult to conform our will to that of God when we have the eyes of our faith well open to see under all that happens, under all crosses, under all veils, the will of our heavenly Father It was thus that the Saviour saw the hand of His Father presenting Him the chalice of His Passion, though this Passion was the work of Judas and the Jews: *The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* He said to Peter.

All that we receive from the hand of God becomes sweet and agreeable. We often say: I would willingly submit, if my cross were not the result of my own fault or of the malice of men, or if it came from God. . . . Have more faith, and you will see that it comes from God, that it is always God who imposes it upon you, since He permits it to reach you—since, without willing the sin you have committed or the injustice of which you are the victim, He wills the suffering which results from it.

2d. We must exercise ourselves in this holy conformity: 1st. In ordinary and daily events. . . . 2d. In the labors and functions to be fulfilled. . . . 3d. In accepting the gifts, more or less advantageous, which we have received from nature. . . . 4th. In sorrow and sickness. . . . 5th. In temptations and aridities. . . . 6th. In the success or sterility of our labors. . . . 7th. In spiritual things themselves, and our greater or less progress in virtue. . . .

3d. We must exercise ourselves by degrees—first subject, if necessary, our rebellious will by force; then accustom it to submit promptly and willingly; finally, unite it to the divine will so closely it may be lost therein and confounded with the good pleasure of God. . . .

4th. We must frequently ask of God the grace to know and perfectly accomplish His holy will. St. Ignatius habitually terminated his letters in

these words: *I pray God that He grant you to ever know and perfectly accomplish His holy will.* St. Ignatius said also: *Govern me, Lord; dispose of me according to Thy designs and Thy will; for I know that Thou always treatest me with love.* The Holy Spirit Himself teaches us to say: *Lord, what wilt Thou that I do? . . . My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready! . . . Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!*

CHAPTER LVIII.

PRUDENCE.

Estote prudentes sicut serpentes (Be ye wise as serpents).—MATT. x. 16.

PRUDENCE occupies among the virtues a superior rank; it is the first of the four cardinal virtues, to which all the others are attached. Thus we see it shining with particular splendor on the brow of the Blessed Virgin, whom the Church salutes with the title of Virgin most prudent—*Virgo prudentissima.* We need not be astonished, then, that the divine Master recommends prudence so particularly to His apostles, and through them to us all, saying: *Be ye wise as serpents.* In the parable of the ten virgins He even goes so far as to show us that without true prudence we do not enter heaven. . . .

What, then, must we understand by the virtue of prudence? And how should we practise it?

I. Prudence. Prudence, justly called the

moderator or guide—*auriga*—of virtues, is a *moral virtue which directs man and leads him to act suitably in all the affairs of life.* The venerable Abbé Hamon explains it better when, after the opinion of St. Francis of Sales, he defines prudence *a virtue which teaches us to think, to say, to do what is necessary at the time and in the manner required.*

There is a false prudence which we must not confound with the virtue of which we are speaking. The false prudence, which the Holy Spirit calls the *wisdom of the children of this world, the wisdom of the flesh, which is an enemy to God* (Luke xvi. 8; Rom. viii. 6), consists in a certain skill which may be called the *art of succeeding in temporal affairs.* Its only object is the goods of this present life, riches, and human grandeur, which it strives to attain by all means, honest or dishonest, provided they be efficacious and sufficiently lawful in appearance not to outrage public opinion. These means, besides dissimulation, deceit, and the intrigues of politics, are calumny, defamation of rivals, hypocrisy, bribery, corruption, sometimes violence and intimidation, always great energy, indefatigable labor to attain the end. It is this prudence which the Saviour depicts in the parable of the unjust steward, which He concludes by saying *that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the chil-*

dren of light (Luke xvi. 8). To this false prudence which gives death is opposed true prudence, the *wisdom of the spirit*, which is *life and peace. The wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace* (Rom. viii. 6). Its object is not the false riches which death takes away, but those which are immortal and truly worthy of man, because man was made to possess them; these riches are virtue and heavenly glory. Prudence has them ever in view in the general conduct of life and in all particular affairs.

The general conduct of life is its direction towards the end of human existence—namely, eternal salvation, the acquisition of which constitutes the great affair of man here below. True prudence requires before all things that this affair be made sure. . . .

Particular affairs include all that we have to accomplish in the spiritual or temporal order: Christian duties, the duties of our state, studies, vocation, commercial affairs, business enterprises, social plans, a journey, a party of amusement; all these things come within the province of prudence, which imprints upon them that seal of fitness and perfection necessary to the best success.

In saying that prudence guides man in the fulfilment of the duties of his state we exclude no social position. Human society is divided

into two parts, one of which is dependent on the other; one is superior and the other inferior; one commands, and the other obeys and executes what is commanded. All need prudence to fulfil their respective rôles, but this virtue is particularly necessary for those who command; it then takes the name of governing prudence — *prudentia gubernatrix* — because it stands in a measure at the helm of the social ship, directs its course, and saves it from wreck.

Prudence extends, then, to all the actions of life and is everywhere necessary to us. It is prudence which saves us from dangers of soul and body, which helps us to extricate ourselves from peril; it is prudence which wisely enlightens us in the management of affairs and guides us to success.

Happy, then, as the Holy Spirit says, *is the man that findeth wisdom and is rich in prudence! The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the chiefest and purest gold. She is more precious than all riches; and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, hath*

established the heavens by prudence (Prov. iii. 13–19).

But how acquire, how practise this prudence?

II. Practice. To acquire this precious virtue we must not content ourselves with the lessons of experience, which are too slowly and too dearly learned, but, after the example of Solomon, ask it of God: *I wished, and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me* (Wis. vii. 7). *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly* (James i. 5).

To prayer we must add personal co-operation, and endeavor to know the qualities of Christian prudence, to follow its principles and rules, and to avoid the contrary fault of imprudence.

The qualities of Christian prudence are indicated in these words of our Saviour: *Be ye wise as serpents and simple as doves.* This means that our prudence must be adroit and at the same time simple; that, on the one hand, we must imitate the serpent by employing every means and by making every sacrifice, and on the other the dove by doing nothing to wound faith or conscience and never consenting to any sacrifice in this respect. In fact, the dove is distinguished by the purity of its glance, and the serpent for the skill with which it insinuates

itself everywhere, and, as St. Jerome says, for the admirable instinct with which he protects his head by covering it with the rest of his body, exposing his body to all the blows to save his head and his life.

The prudent ones of the world also imitate the serpent, but the serpent of Eve and the fiery serpents of the desert which give death; true prudence imitates the brazen serpent which gives life. . . .

The principles of prudence and its chief rules are as follows:

In all things consider the end and take fitting and proper means to attain it.

Never lose sight of God's law: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Ps. cx. 10).

Be ever obedient. *An obedient man shall speak of victory* (Prov. xxi. 28).

Be humble and distrust your own views; ask counsel and yield willingly to the advice of another. It is most imprudent to heed but one's self.

Avoid self-will and obstinacy; avoid equally that weakness which adopts all counsels and yields to the desires of counsellors rather than to their reasons.

Avoid believing too readily what you hear, and condemn no one unheard.

Avoid speaking or acting without full know-

ledge of a subject and without sufficient reflection.

Avoid indecision, slowness, as much as precipitation. . . .

Act with an upright intention, never permitting yourself to be influenced by prejudice, fear, interest, or any ill-regulated feeling.

Refrain from speaking or acting under the influence of any passion, whether pride, love, hatred, or anger.

Be discreet, say little, but listen much.

Distrust all innovations.

According to the doctrine of St. Ignatius, employ every human means as if success depended wholly upon them, and at the same time place all your confidence in God as if all depended on God alone.

Imitate St. Francis of Sales. Before undertaking a work of zeal this holy bishop, a model of prudence, consulted and reflected for some time; but when he recognized that the work was according to the designs of God he boldly began it and pursued it, permitting no obstacle to deter him.

Avoid all negligence: *Take ye heed, watch and pray* (Mark xiii. 33). *Approach the Lord and be enlightened* (Ps. xxxiii. 6).

Principal faults which prudence condemns:

Exposing ourselves to be eternally lost by living a life of indifference to religion, arguing:

Perhaps I may fall into eternal fire, as faith teaches, but I do not care; I shall do as others do; I shall take the risk. . . .

Living in mortal sin and in continual danger of dying in that state. . . .

Exposing ourselves to lose the treasure of faith by reading evil publications or by listening to impious discourses. . . .

Approaching shoals where virtue is wrecked, and which we call occasions of mortal sin. *He that loveth danger*, says the Holy Spirit, *shall perish in it* (Ecclus. iii. 27).

Neglecting to secure our salvation and deferring from day to day our return to God. *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day* (Ecclus. v. 8).

Living in forgetfulness of death. . . .

In sickness neglecting to summon a priest in time, and incurring for ourselves or our relatives the risk of dying without the sacraments.

Such are the faults, or rather the misfortunes, which prudence causes us to avoid, while, on the other hand, it leads man by the easiest way to the gate of eternal salvation. Then let us endeavor to practise this precious virtue after the example of the Virgin most prudent, who is our Mother, and who by her intercession will help us to acquire this treasure.

CHAPTER LIX.

RECOLLECTION.

Jesus declinavit a turba . . . et dimissa turba ascendit in montem solus orare (Jesus went aside from the multitude . . . and went up into the mountain to pray).—JOHN v. 13; MATT. xiv. 23.

RECOLLECTION, modesty, solitude, silence, the presence of God, are things intimately linked one with another, and which have much affinity among themselves, without, however, being confounded. Recollection is the end; modesty, solitude, silence, the remembrance of the presence of God are the means; for these four virtues sustain one another and mutually concur to establish in the soul the holy disposition which we call *recollection.*

Recollection is the state of a soul which is mistress of its faculties and habitually applies them to the things of God. This state is opposed to dissipation. When it is habitual it constitutes a virtue which we call a *spirit of recollection.*

It is one of the virtues most necessary to lead

a holy and perfect life—a precious virtue which we should earnestly cherish and practise with ardor.

I. Love of recollection. We should love recollection because of its necessity and its advantages.

Recollection is a necessary condition of the interior life and spiritual progress.

Do you aspire to the interior life? Apply yourself to recollection; it is the gate through which you shall enter this desirable life. You are aware that the spiritual or interior life is the life of the soul with God in the world of faith. This world is in the depth of our souls, in our innermost heart: *Lo, the kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21). It is there that the Creator is seated on a throne of mercy awaiting His creature, to instruct him, to hear him, to govern him, to enrich him. . . . It is there that the soul in her turn finds a dwelling, communion, and life wholly different and much better than that of the exterior world; she lives there with her heavenly Father, her God, and her all.

Now, the entrance to this life is recollection; we must recollect ourselves and withdraw into the secret recesses of our hearts to find our Father: *Enter into thy chamber*, says the Saviour, *and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret* (Matt. vi. 6).

Have you at heart your advancement in virtue? Keep yourself recollected; it is the way to advance. To advance in virtue is to preserve and increase the graces of God, to develop the precious seed which He sows in our souls at times of mercy; for example, during prayer, while in retreat, or when receiving the sacraments. . . .

This seed we must preserve and fructify in recollection, otherwise the birds of the air will bear it away. . . .

A soul without recollection, a soul given to exterior dissipation, allows its good thoughts and holy affections to escape and finds itself invaded by things from without. It resembles an uncovered vessel, a house with an ever-open door, a public way which men and animals traverse at will. It is not there that good plants grow, that treasures are preserved and increased. . . .

Why is it that many remain long years without making any progress in virtue? It is very frequently because they are wanting in recollection: *You have sowed much*, says the Prophet Aggeus, *and brought in little*, . . . and *he that hath earned wages put them into a bag with holes* (Agg. i. 6).

II. Then we must love recollection because of its necessity; we must also love it because of its precious advantages.

The advantages which recollection procures as its proper fruits, are peace, prayer, an increase of all virtues.

Peace. The visible world is an unceasing turmoil; to find calm and peace we must withdraw from it. Then we find peace, and with it our Lord, the God of peace: *His place is in peace* (Ps. lxxv. 3).

Prayer. It is in the calm of recollection that we hear God's voice, that we see His light, that we relish His gifts and His sweetness. . . . It is prayer, that sweet converse with God, which causes us to find, as the apostle says, heaven upon earth: *Our conversation is in heaven*—we already live in heaven (Phil. iii. 20).

An increase of all virtues. This peace and this light of God is the atmosphere suitable to all virtues. . . . In it they germinate and develop like germs in spring, like flowers in the heat of a conservatory shut out from the winter storms. . . .

Such are the advantages of recollection. Then we must love it and earnestly practise it. To practise recollection well two things are needed: we must remove obstacles and employ the necessary means, each one according to his state and his condition.

All that induces and promotes dissipation is an obstacle to recollection. A dissipated mind

is like a father of a family who is always absent and thus affords his servants fatal liberty. . . .

That which keeps the mind abroad and prevents it from recollecting itself is, 1st, curiosity to see and hear everything, as well as immoderate liberty accorded to all the senses; . . . 2d, too frequent excursions and visits; 3d, useless conversations and recreations; 4th, human friendships and too tender attachments which bind the heart; 5th, excessive occupation and over-eagerness. *Do not give, only lend yourself to affairs,* . . . says St. Bernard.

The means of recollection which keep the heart closed to earth and open to heaven are, 1st, modesty and guard of the senses; . . . 2d, guard of the imagination and the heart; . . . 3d, solitude; . . . 4th, silence and reserve in our words: . . . 5th, the remembrance of the presence of God. . . .

"Here," says St. Theresa to her daughters of Carmel, "is the way to acquire a habit of recollection: Represent to yourself within you a palace of surpassing splendor, all of gold and precious stones—in a word, fitting for the great Monarch who abides there; and that you concur in part, which is true, to give it this beauty. This palace is your soul; when she is pure the beauty of the most superb edifice fades before hers; virtues are the diamonds which form her adornment, and the greater the virtues the

more resplendent the diamonds. Finally, imagine that the King of kings is in this palace, that in His infinite goodness He wishes to be your Father, that He is seated on a throne of priceless value, and that this throne is your heart." *

How must we use these means of recollection?

How must we keep ourselves recollected when we are obliged to occupy ourselves with exterior things?

Exterior employments which we fulfil as duties of our state and to obey God's will do not prevent true recollection, provided we are faithful to three things: 1st, to form a pious intention; 2d, not to yield to over-eagerness; 3d, to give as much time to prayer as we can. Then we shall be like the sanctuary lamp suspended before the altar, which may be moved to the right or the left, but when permitted to resume its equilibrium returns to its place before the altar as its centre of rest. It is thus that the soul, in spite of its exterior occupations, if it have a spirit of recollection, ever returns to the feet of God as its centre of rest.

We may, then, in the midst of even the most distracting affairs, preserve our heart recollected after the example of our Saviour in the

* *The Way of Perfection.*

labors of His public life. He fulfilled His ministry among men with the purest intention as the work of His Father, and when He could He withdrew from the multitude and gave Himself to prayer. *He went aside from the multitude*, says the Gospel, *and went into the mountain alone to pray.* And the Blessed Virgin—in what fervent recollection did she not fulfil all the duties of her state in the holy household of Nazareth! . . . Let us study this example of our august Mother, and let us ask her assistance to imitate her.

CHAPTER LX.

SANCTIFICATION OF ONE'S STATE.

Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo : alius quidem sic, alius vero sic (Every one hath his proper gift from God : one after this manner, and another after that).—1 Cor. vii. 7.

IF it were given me to penetrate into the depths of your hearts it seems to me that I would find there a desire, and that I would hear a secret voice saying: I desire to be what God wishes me and to fulfil all His designs for me.

Is not this, in fact, your supreme wish and the term of all your desires? Is it not to perfection that your heart aspires?—an aspiration as legitimate as it is noble and elevated, for it is thus by realizing God's designs upon you that you will reach a most beautiful throne in heaven, and that on earth you will fill the noblest career, a career as brilliant as that of the stars, and that you will attain true perfection.

Now, to attain perfection a very simple means is the sanctification of our state; to sanctify the state in which Providence has placed us is all

hat is required of us in order to correspond to God's designs upon us and to give our existence all its price, all its value, all its perfection.

All states are good, though different and unequal in dignity. Gold, silver, marble are good, though not equally valuable. It is the same with the different states established by Providence. But as the commonest material, worked by the hand of a skilful artist, may surpass in merit the most valuable material, so each one may give to his state the greatest merit before God, if he imprint upon it the perfect image of Jesus Christ; this he does by sanctifying it.

Let us make this doctrine very clear by examination. I. Why ought we to endeavor to sanctify our state? II. In what does this sanctification consist? III. How must we accomplish it?

I. We must apply ourselves to the sanctification of our state, whatever it may be, for several motives:

1st. It is in this that each one's perfection consists according to God's designs. Consider the order of nature; see how the Creator has given to each flower its own beauty, to each star a particular splendor, which is different in all. . . . Hence that admirable variety which produces the harmony and perfect beauty of the whole.

The same variety reigns in the world of grace and in that of glory, among the saints on earth and among the elect in heaven. . . . Now, each one acquires the beauty which is proper to him by living holily in his state.

2d. The greatest saints—St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself—sought no other way of perfection. Contemplate the life they led at Nazareth. . . .

3d. It is thus that we perfectly accomplish God's will, the accomplishment of which is a source of peace and happiness; so that a man who applies himself to sanctify his state leads the happiest life here below. In fact, what is the summary of the divine will for each of us? What does it require, if not that we live worthily in the state where His providence has placed us? . . .

4th. It is thus that we amass the greatest treasure of merits. Each one finds in his state occasions of practising the virtues and making the sacrifices God asks of him; it is there that God shapes the crosses and prepares the graces proportioned to each of us. . . .

5th. Finally, it is thus that we attain the highest perfection, since one's merit depends less on one's state than upon the manner in which he sanctifies it—the manner in which he performs its duties. . . .

II. In what does this sanctification consist?

It consists in fulfilling all the duties, bearing all the trials of our state, and in doing one and the other in a Christian spirit.

Duties of our state. We must distinguish between duty and amusement. Our life is a chain of duties, not a tissue of amusements; a time of labor, not of enjoyment; a mission, a voyage, not a simple excursion or plan of pleasure. . . . Unfortunately all men do not consider life from a true point of view. There are some who take it seriously; they are men of duty. The majority take it lightly, viewing it through their passions; these are men of pleasure. What we must have in view is duty, not pleasure.

Now, there are two kinds of duties: the duties of Christians, common to us all, and the duties proper to each one's state.

The duties of a Christian consist in avoiding sin, observing the commandments, frequenting the church, instructing one's self by good reading, practising prayer and good works. . . .

The duties of one's state properly refer, 1st, to the family; . . . 2d, to exterior relations—these are duties of civil life and of the laws of good breeding Christianly understood; . . . 3d, the obligations of one's state include also the care of financial affairs: we must regulate our accounts, reduce our expenses to just proportions, determine in advance how we shall

use our income, and set aside a portion of it for the poor and the Church. . . .

Trials of our state. The portion of the cross of Jesus Christ which is assigned us, the cross which we must carry each day, is, first, the trials attached to our duties; . . . then our personal miseries—those which we find in ourselves; . . . and, finally, the annoyances which we encounter through others. . . .

We must bear these trials, fulfil these duties, *Christianly*—that is, according to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Let us frequently ask, What would be the conduct of Jesus in the circumstances in which I find myself? . . . What would Mary's conduct be? . . . What would they do, what would they say? . . .

III. How can we accomplish the sanctification of our state? How can we Christianly fulfil all our duties? How can we Christianly bear all our trials?

1st. To sanctify my state I should be interested in it, love it, as the position in which God Himself has placed me and wills me to be.

2d. To sanctify my state and fulfil all its duties I must will to do so; our resolution in this respect should be immovable and irrevocable.

3d. I will attain thereto by the grace of God; grace renders all things possible, and even easy.

We must beware of placing any obstacle to it, and unceasingly ask for it; we have a special right to the graces of our state and vocation. . . .

4th. Through the succor which we find in sodalities and associations devoted to good works. . . .

5th. Through labor. Labor is a great law established by the Creator, and one to which we must submit. . . . Without labor we cannot fulfil our duties. . . .

6th. By taking for our rule duty, and not our taste and caprice; by ever preferring duty to pleasure: *The necessary before the useful, the useful before the agreeable.*

7th. It is very profitable to take part in good works and to be enrolled in benevolent associations. . . .

8th. The most efficacious means of fulfilling all one's duties faithfully is to make for one's self a rule of life, to have a certain order for the day, in which a time is fixed for the principal actions. By employing these means we shall make ours a family life, a life of benevolence and happiness.

9th. There are shoals to be avoided which we must know. They are idleness, luxury, bad reading, balls, immoral plays, forgetfulness of God at the period of marriage, intemperance of the tongue.

By avoiding these shoals, by following the rules we have just indicated, each one will sanctify his state according to the designs of God, and in this way he will attain the perfection for which he is destined on earth and in heaven.

CHAPTER LXI.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Vani sunt omnes homines in quibus non subest scientia Dei (All men are vain in whom there is not knowledge of God).—Wis. xiii. 1.

IF the various sciences cultivated by the human understanding are precious and beautiful, there is one which surpasses all others by its importance, its beauty, its necessity: it is the science of religion. Religious science is the golden branch of the tree of knowledge, the one which bears fruits of life and immortality.

I. Importance. To comprehend its preponderating importance it suffices to consider that religion exercises an essential influence on all humanity, on individuals, on families, on society and states—an influence which is not limited to man's existence in this world, but which extends to his future life, to his eternal destiny. . . .

Religion is to the human race what good seed is in a cultivated land—a condition of fruitful-

ness and riches. The truths of religion are the principles of moral life and of happiness which make a people flourishing. . . . We may say also that the holy science of religion is to other sciences what the sun is to the moon, what the soul is to the body—their true light, their vigor, and their life. Human sciences need religion as a complement, without which they lead man into the most deplorable errors. . . .

II. Beauty. To appreciate the beauty, the charm of religious study we need only consider its object. What, in fact, is the object of sacred science? God and His works—the universe, creatures, and the Creator, considered in their great relations; man—man particularly, his nature, his origin, his eternal destiny.

What is more vast and imposing, what is more magnificent and delightful, than this object? It contains all the questions most worthy of man's investigations, most interesting to his mind and heart.

That which adds still more to the interest is that this noble science rests on the surest principles; it is drawn from books as true as they are charming, even in a literary point of view. I mean the books of the Bible and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. In a word, the science of religion is the queen of sciences, the sun of the human intelligence, the tree of life,

the fountain of living water, where man must drink to satisfy at the same time the thirst of mind and heart.

The other sciences, though good in themselves, do not satisfy us; they do not correspond to the needs of our souls; for this reason they cannot be separated from religious science, which must complete and give them their life. Without this vital branch the tree of science bears but poisoned flowers and dead fruit. . . .

III. Necessity. We must know our religion to live well and to live happily. The law of God which religion teaches is the rule of human life; to observe it is to live well; to forget it is to fall into every error. Now, to observe this holy law we must first know it; he who possesses this noble knowledge will easily apply himself to conforming his life thereto. From that time he will find happiness, as far as it is attainable here below; for God willed that His holy law should be for man a principle of true happiness even in this world: *Justice exalteth a nation: but sin maketh nations miserable* (Prov. xiv. 34).

We should know our religion well in order to preserve the treasure of faith in the midst of the assaults of modern impiety. To know it *well* is to possess not only an exact and catechetical knowledge, but that reasoning knowledge which includes the invincible proofs upon

which the truths of faith are based. It is of this profound knowledge that the apostle speaks when he tells us: *Be always ready to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope which is in you* (1 Peter iii. 15).

CHAPTER LXII.

GOOD WORKS.

Eris quasi hortus irriguus et sicut fons aquarum, cujus non deficient aquæ (Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail).—ISAIAS lviii. 11.

TO whom are these beautiful words of the Holy Spirit applied? To the charitable and benevolent man who feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, comforts the afflicted. Let me give you all of this beautiful passage: *Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as morning, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail* (Is. lviii. 7–11).

Yes, if there is a happy man on earth, it is he who is charitable and benevolent. Let us consider for a moment this happiness, and let us see what we have to do to merit it.

I. Happiness of benevolence. What is the happiness of a charitable man? In what does this happiness consist?

The charitable and benevolent man is happy because he is loved of God and men. He is loved of God, who sees in him His most perfect image. For God is charity; He gives forth His blessings and His gifts as the sun does its floods of light; and the charitable man, like God, multiplying benefits about him, seems, like Him, to give forth a divine splendor. It is for this reason that he wins the regard of God and becomes the object of His love and complacency. He is loved by men by those who are the objects of his benevolence as well as by those who witness it. . . . He is loved during life, he is regretted at death, and his memory, like that of St. Vincent of Paul, is held in benediction during future generations.

He is happy because he makes good use of his fortune. Could he employ the superfluous means he has received from God in a nobler manner than relieving the unfortunate? How easy and consoling will be the account he shall have to render of it to God! . . .

He is happy because he makes a good use of

his time. Many lose time in frivolities, frequently even in sin; they will render a severe account of it to their sovereign Judge. Not so with the benevolent man; the time which remains to him after the accomplishment of the duties of his state he devotes to studying the wants of the poor, to devising means to relieve them: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem*—Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor (Ps. xl. 1).

He is happy because he shall be filled with blessings. The Lord will pour into his heart peace and joy, with the sweet hope of his greatest mercies: *Estote misericordes: . . . mensuram bonam et confertam . . . dabunt in sinum vestrum—Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom* (Luke vi. 38).

II. The practice of benevolence. In exercising benevolence we must have before our eyes the double rule of justice and charity.

The rule of justice indicates the obligation of alms and the degrees of this obligation.

All who are in easy circumstances, and who, after meeting the requirements which Christians consider as belonging to their state and their position, have anything superfluous, should reserve a portion of it for the poor, the Church,

and works of charity. In cases of grave necessity—in public calamities occasioned by scarcity, floods, or other afflictions ; in times of moral calamities, when material aid is required to preserve a people from perversion, from religious corruption. propagated either through a bad press or impious schools—then, according to the doctrine of theologians, the interpreters of the Christian law, all who have any means, and still more those who are rich, must make sacrifices by taking even from the necessities of their state. They are obliged, then, to deny themselves in behalf of charity not only frivolous and vain expenditures, but even those which their position does not too rigidly require.

The rich who turn away their eyes from the poor, and who fail to fulfil these grave obligations, shall hear from the sovereign Judge these words of condemnation : *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, for I was hungry and you gave me not to eat.* . . . Their fate shall be that of him who refused Lazarus the crumbs which fell from his table : *The rich man died, and he was buried in hell* (Luke xvi. 22).

The rule of charity consists in giving, not as much as we ought, but as much as we can. It is thus announced by the holy Tobias : *If thou have much, give abundantly : if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.*

It was at the end of his life that this holy man gave his supreme counsels to his son in these words: *All the days of thy life have God in thy mind: and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor trangress the commandments of the Lord our God. Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity; for alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness* (Tob. iv. 6–11).

The rule of charity is the easiest and the best; it is most conformable to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and most fruitful in blessings from above, for, as the apostle tells us: *He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings*—that is, abundantly—*shall also reap blessings* (2 Cor. ix. 6).

Moreover, charity proportions its alms to the need of the moment. When the want is great it does not calculate, justly relying on the words of Jesus Christ: *Omni petenti te tribue; . . . date, et dabitur vobis—Give to every one that asketh thee. . . . Give, and it shall be given you* (Luke vi. 30, 38).

Blessed is the man animated by this spirit of

charity; the mercy of God is assured to him: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

If they are still in sin they shall be enabled to leave the sad state, *for alms deliver from all sin, and from death* (Tob. iv. 11; Dan. iv. 24).

If they are already in God's grace they will persevere therein and continually increase in virtue.

All, just and sinners, if they are charitable, will secure their salvation; they shall all on the last day hear these words: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. . . . Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me* (Matt. xxv. 34).

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

Sancta et salubris est cogitatio pro defunctis exorare, ut a peccatis solvantur (It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they be loosed from sins).—2 MACH. xii. 46.

AMONG the devotions devoutly practised by the Church there is one which has the privilege of being recommended by the Holy Ghost Himself; it is prayer for the dead, charity to the souls in purgatory. We read of Judas Machabeus, the chief of the armies of Israel, that, after a victory gained over the enemies of his people, he had sacrifice offered for the dead, for the soldiers who perished on the battle-field, and Holy Scripture praised this action, adding *that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.*

Then let us love this truly holy and salutary devotion! To nourish and strengthen it more and more in our souls, let us consider the motives for it and the manner of practising it.

I. Motives. We should pray for the dead

because faith and charity make it a duty for us.

What does faith tell us? That there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained therein may be helped by the suffrages of the living. Purgatory is a place of expiation where the souls of the just who are not wholly pure are cleansed by fire and other sufferings.

We know that a soul leaving this world may be in a state of mortal sin, or in a state of perfect grace, or in a state of imperfect grace. If it is in a state of mortal sin it falls under the decrees of divine Justice and descends at once into hell: this is perdition. If it is in a state of perfect grace—that is, pure of all stain before God, and free of all debt to His justice—it enters at once into the abode of glory.

But if it is in a state of imperfect grace, even though it be destined for heaven, it will only enter there later, after it shall have endured a just expiation. Nothing defiled can enter heaven; and this soul, though in God's grace, is not free of all stain nor absolved of all debt. It bears the stain of venial sins, and a debt of temporal punishment which it has not been careful to pay before its death. Nothing, however, was easier for it, since the divine Mercy gave it abundant means. Not having profited of this time of mercy, it must now satisfy the divine Justice which sends it to the flames

of purgatory, where it will remain until the last farthing is paid—*Donec reddas novissimum quadrantem* (Matt. v. 26).

This is what faith tells us.

What does charity tell us? Love your neighbor as yourself; give to the poor; have compassion on those who suffer and those who mourn.

If you yourself were in these expiating flames, suffering the most excruciating pain, would you not be glad to receive relief? Ah! is the day far distant when this supposition will be a reality? Shall you not go to purgatory? If you do not go to purgatory, it will be either because you go lower to the terrible eternal fire or direct to heaven. Is one or the other very probable? . . . Then help the souls in purgatory as you would one day wish others to help you.

Charity commands us to give alms, particularly to those who are in the greatest need and cannot help themselves. The souls in purgatory are in greatest need; they endure hunger and every privation, consumed as they are by the desire to see their God, and they can no longer help themselves, for the time of mercy is passed. Then it is for us to help them and to exercise towards them all the works of mercy.

Charity pities all who suffer and all who mourn. Ah! the sufferings and tears here be-

low are nothing compared to those of purgatory. *There an hour of suffering is more than a hundred years of the most austere penance on earth . . .* (*Imit.*) Charitable souls, relieve misery here below; yes, do all you can to relieve it, but do not forget your unhappy brethren in purgatory, a prey to the most terrible suffering, which you can always alleviate.

We must pray for the souls in purgatory because God, the souls themselves, our own interest ask it.

First, it is God who asks it. These souls are infinitely dear to Him. He ardently desires to be able to admit them to the abode of glory, but His justice forbids it unless a satisfaction be offered Him by the suffrages of the living. If we offer it Him, if our charity break the chains, open the prison of these dear captives, and permit them to fly to the bosom of their Father, whom they overwhelm with joy, what must our merit be in His eyes! It is we who give Him these dear children, and He regards this charity as exercised towards Himself—*Mihi fecistis.*

The souls themselves ask it. What earnest supplications they address us! They are justly assigned the words of the holy man Job: *Miseremini mei—Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me* (Job xix. 21). Ah! if a father

and mother in cruel suffering were to ask a son to give them some relief, a drop of water, what child would be so unnatural as to refuse it, as not to hasten to do all in his power for them?

Our own interest asks it. *As much relief as you procure the souls in purgatory, so much will you receive in your turn,* says St. Jerome. These beautiful words of the saint are only a commentary upon those of our Saviour: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Give, and it shall be given to you. With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again* (Luke vi.; Matt. vii.) *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day* (Ps. xl. 1). St. John of the Cross tells us, with just reason: *Give alms for your own sake.*

Nothing, moreover, is more proper to make us lead a Christian and perfect life. Devotion to the faithful departed recalls to us the most salutary truths; it reminds us of death, judgment, hell, even of paradise. It shows us what sin is in the eyes of God—not only mortal sin, but the least venial sin. It excites us to Christian penance, to the good employment of our time, and to the performance of good works. Such are the precious advantages which charity to the souls in purgatory procures our souls. *It is, then, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.*

II. Practice. What should the practice of this devotion be, and how should we help the souls in purgatory?

We must help the souls in purgatory by our prayers, by our good works, by the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of the sacraments; finally, by the application of indulgences.

1st. Prayers. All prayers are good; public and private, morning and evening prayer, litanies and rosaries—all serve to relieve the souls in purgatory.

2d. Good works—alms, fasting, all acts of mortification or charity.

3d. The Mass. This divine sacrifice, in virtue of its institution, is offered for the living and the dead. *One of the holiest and most meritorious works*, says St. Augustine, *is to offer prayer and sacrifice for the faithful departed.* And, speaking of his mother, St. Monica, the same holy Father says: *I pray all who shall read these pages to remember her at the altar of the Lord.* The pious faithful have Masses celebrated for the faithful departed; they assist at the holy sacrifice; they offer Holy Communion for these suffering souls.

4th. Indulgences. A last and not the least powerful means of helping our suffering brethren is the application of indulgences. There are some which are *partial*—for example, those which we gain by making acts of Faith, Hope,

and Charity; by reciting the rosary; by making the sign of the cross with holy water, or even without holy water; by uttering certain ejaculatory prayers, such as, *My Jesus, mercy!* There are *plenary* indulgences, which we gain by receiving the sacraments on certain days, and also by making the *Road of the Cross.* This last devotion, which may be practised as often as we wish, is singularly advantageous as suffrage for the souls in purgatory, besides being the source of all the graces that we derive from considering the Passion.*

It is, then, as easy to relieve the holy souls who suffer in the place of expiation as it is salutary and meritorious. Let us to-day redouble our zeal and charity for them, as we are asked to do by Him who said: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

* See *Christian instructed on Indulgences*, Maurel.

CHAPTER LXIV.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis Filius hominis veniet (Be you then also ready, for at the hour you think not the Son of man will come).—LUKE xii. 40.

PREPARATION for death is here recommended by our Saviour: *Be ready*, He tells us, *for at the hour you think not the Son of man will come*. He will come to call you from this world to appear before His tribunal and render an account of His works.

Prepare yourselves, He tells us, that you may not be surprised in a state of mortal sin and condemned by the sovereign Judge; prepare yourselves, that you may be found in a state of grace, faithful to His service, and worthy of His eternal rewards.

Let us attentively consider this great warning of the Son of God. Let us see why we ought to prepare for death, and how we ought to make this preparation.

I. Necessity of preparing ourselves for death.

Why must we think of death and prepare ourselves for this supreme moment?

1st. Prudence makes it a duty. When an important future event is announced to a man, when he is to perform a great and critical act upon which his fortune, his glory, or his life shall depend, does not prudence oblige him to make preparation for it? If a king is to give battle, and this battle is to decide his crown; if an artist is to paint a picture upon which his fortune will depend; if an archer is to shoot an arrow at a certain mark, under pain of being burned alive if he fail, will they not, with such grave interests at stake, make every preparation, take every precaution, use every means to insure success?

Now, death awaits us in the future; nothing is more certain. Upon my death shall depend my eternity; my kingdom and my crown are at stake; my life, my fortune are at stake, and a life, a fortune, a crown which shall be imperishable, which shall be gained, or lost irrevocably. Then would it not be sovereign imprudence to make no preparation for so supreme a moment? I must die well, under pain of being burned alive in a fire which shall never be extinguished. Should I not take every measure to escape such a misfortune?

2d. We must prepare ourselves to die, in order to avoid a bad death. We call a bad death

that of the sinner who dies in the state of mortal sin. This death, says the Holy Spirit, is *very bad*—yes, very bad; it is the misfortune of misfortunes, for it is a *terrible thing*, as the apostle says, *to fall into the hands of the living God*, to be struck with the sentence of damnation, to hear these terrifying words: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire.* . . .

This terrible fate will be ours if we do not prepare ourselves by a sincere conversion and a Christian life to die the death of the just. You live in enmity with God, your conscience tells you; you persevere in this state. Alas! you will die therein, and your death will be the signal of your damnation. No, you tell me, I have no intention to die in this state; later, as death approaches, I will amend. Vain delusion, frail hope upon which you dare to rely and live in sin! Delaying repentance is the fatal snare which leads to eternal perdition the greatest number of souls who are lost among Christians. You will amend later, you say; but will you have the time? Will you have the mind? Shall you have the will? Who has promised you the grace of conversion at the hour of death? Ah! He who offers pardon to the sinner does not promise him the morrow. No, it is a rule that as you live, so you shall die. If there are exceptions do you think they are numerous? Out

of a hundred who live ill, how many do you think die well? Have we not all reason to tremble? And would you take any risk? Ah! my dear brother, return to God at once.

3d. Preparation for death is necessary, because we must ensure ourselves a good death. A good death is the grace of graces, and the greatest blessing we can have here below, since it secures us salvation. It is the golden door which opens heaven to us.

Whoever dies in a state of grace dies a good death; but a good death is susceptible of a double degree, which it behooves us to distinguish. When we leave this world in a state of grace, but not free of all debt towards the divine Justice—this is the death of the just, a good death, but one which could be better. When we appear before God, not simply in a state of grace, but also pure of all stain, free of all debt to the divine Justice, rich in merits and virtues, then this is the death of the saints, which Holy Scripture tells us is *precious in the sight of God.*

What is more desirable? Who would not die such a death? Then to attain this happiness we must merit it by a holy preparation for death.

II. Manner of preparing for death. There is a double preparation: one is remote and the other proximate.

The remote preparation should begin from our youth and last all our life; it consists in being in a state of grace and leading a Christian life.

We must keep ourselves in a state of grace, that we may be always safe, even in case of sudden death. How many there are who die suddenly! One is found dead in his bed, an other in his arm-chair, another in his garden; some fall dead in the street, at table, at a ball, at the theatre, at play, in church; others fall by accidents, by crime; an assassin may surprise a traveller; a carriage may overturn and crush its inmates; a train may go off the track or over a precipice; a ship may be swallowed up in a storm; a factory, a mill, a mine may explode—in fine, a thousand other accidents which we witness every day may carry men off suddenly, leaving them not a moment for preparation. Woe to those who are then in a state of mortal sin!

Now, may not any of these accidents happen? Then should we not be ever in a state of grace, and unceasingly lead a Christian life? Ought I not regulate even my temporal affairs in such a manner as to merit after my death no reproach from my creditors, my heirs, nor particularly from God, to whom I shall have to render an account of all things?

1st. Proximate preparation. This consists

in devoutly preparing ourselves for the last passage in time of sickness.

A grave illness, the messenger and forerunner of death, is a grace from God; those who know how to profit by it according to His views acquire the merit of confessors and martyrs.

Now, how shall we profit by it? How are we to sanctify sickness? How are we to spend our last days in a Christian manner and leave this world in a holy state?

When we feel the first symptoms of a serious illness we must beware of the usual illusions with which the sick flatter themselves, deceiving themselves and permitting others to deceive them as to the danger of their state. If I have not sufficiently evident proof of my danger I must ask a sincere friend, and learn whether my illness is likely to terminate fatally.

Once I have learned this, I must turn to God and think only of appearing before Him.

Then my first act must be to accept the sickness from the hand of God, my Creator and Lord, with complete submission to His divine will and in union with the sufferings of my Saviour. St. Ignatius wishes that we should receive it even with joy, because it is no less a gift than health.

I must also make to God the sacrifice of my life and accept my death with all my heart—

accept it in expiation of my sins, and in union with the death of my Jesus on the cross, and in a spirit of love for Him who first gave His life for me. It is by thus offering my death as a sacrifice of love to my Saviour that I may share the happiness of the martyrs, who exercise the greatest act of love by giving their life for Jesus.

The sick must not defer receiving the last sacraments. They are a great consolation, a great succor, which the Saviour has prepared for His faithful in their last trials. The reception of the last sacraments is also a great duty for the faithful to accomplish. If you fulfil it promptly, seasonably, you will do so with more edification to your neighbor and more profit to your soul.

Let the sick be patient; let them not lose the smallest portion of the cross which is given them. Their sufferings, if borne well, will serve them in lieu of purgatory. Let them draw their strength from the crucifix and prayer—continual prayer as long as it is possible for them.

Short prayers,—abridged acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, the holy names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the prayer of our Saviour in the Garden of Olives, and other short aspirations, are the easiest and best.

It is also a practical mode of prayer for the

sick to look with affection upon a medal, the holy images of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which they will kiss and clasp to their heart.

Let the blessed candle be lit as a symbol of the faith, hope, and charity in which the Christian wishes to die.

May we all die thus! We shall have this happiness if, docile from this moment to the teachings of our Saviour, we prepare ourselves for the supreme act of our life here below.

CHAPTER LXV.

CARE OF THE SICK.

Infirmos curate (Heal the sick).—MATT. x. 8.

THE care, the service of the sick occupies one of the first places in the Christian works of charity. The Saviour shows us the excellence of it by His own example, by His tender compassion for the sick, for all who, afflicted with any infirmity, sought Him from all parts; He rejected no one, He received all with kindness, cured them, relieving at the same time the miseries of their soul and body.

What He manifests by example He also teaches by words. Speaking of the love of our neighbor, He offers us as model the good Samaritan who bound up the wounds of the unfortunate traveller whom he found half dead in the way. This is not all: when He sends His apostles to preach the Gospel, He particularly recommends to them the care of the sick: *Infirmos curate.* Finally, He expressly promises the kingdom of heaven to those who shall prac-

:ise this work of mercy ; and He declares that He shall regard as done to Himself all that we shall do for our sick brethren: *I was sick, and you visited me* (Matt. xxv. 36).

This work of charity is all the more excellent that frequently the care bestowed upon the body of the sick is instrumental in bringing about the salvation of their souls, and they are thus prepared for a Christian death.

Happy they who devote and consecrate their life to a work so meritorious! Happy also they who perform it in a Christian manner when an occasion presents itself! This occasion is to be found in every family when it pleases God to visit any of the members with sickness.

How should we then act? What should be the conduct of the sick man's kindred and friends? What in particular is the duty of those in charge of him?

I. Kindred and friends of the sick man. The members of one body are intimately united among themselves, according to the words of the apostle: *If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it* (1 Cor. xii. 26). Thus in a Christian family, when any member falls sick all must sincerely compassionate him and manifest the interest and charity which they would wish others to manifest for them in a like case.

Consequently they must not fail to pray for

him; they must be tender and considerate of him, never irritating him, either by noise or by speaking of things which displease him. They must all be watchful of his soul's interest and careful that he receives the rites of the Church in time. It would be doing him a great wrong, it would be betraying his dearest interests, to conceal from him through a false consideration the danger of his state, and to flatter him with an illusive hope of recovery which would prevent his receiving the sacraments.

They must avoid complaining of the sick, bear with patience the inconveniences, the trouble, the expense which sickness usually occasions. Let them be always willing to watch with the sick, and to render them any other services which, no doubt, they themselves may one day require in their turn.

When they visit the sick they must avoid those whispered conversations which are frequently so irritating to the patient. Their conversation, moreover, must be prudent and edifying; they should speak to him only of things which can console him in the Lord. If the sick man die, they should accept the trial with submission to the will of God, and render all the last services to the deceased with Christian piety. Besides a fitting burial, they shall frequently have Masses offered for the repose of

his soul, and distribute alms, and each one shall pray and gain indulgences for the same end, as he would one day wish others to do for him.

II. Sick-nurses. Those who are specially charged with the service and care of the sick have a great and beautiful mission to fulfil; they must look at this mission with the eyes of faith, and appreciate and love it in the Lord.

They should also sincerely love their charge, and see in his person Him who shall one day say to them: *I was sick, and you visited me.*

They should faithfully bestow upon him all the corporal care which his condition requires, and be more zealous still for the spiritual good of his soul.

When Providence has charged you with the care of sickness, give yourself to the work with unreserved devotion; be ready night and day to assist your charge in all his needs. This charitable work will afford you occasions of practising all kinds of virtues: patience, meekness, continual mortification.

If the sick man be exacting and unreasonable, do not complain; be no less compassionate, gentle, and devoted.

Keep his room scrupulously neat, and let there be flowers or something pleasant to recreate his eyes, and some pious object to suggest to him pious thoughts.

Try to console and cheer him, not only by the alleviations approved by the physician, but also by entertaining him with edifying and agreeable conversation. Have also books proper to interest and suitably divert him.

Moreover, you should always, in all things—this is a capital point—treat your patient with prudence and tact. To this end it is very necessary to know, first, not only the nature and gravity of the disease, but also the sick man himself, his disposition, his opinions, his antecedent conduct.

In general avoid speaking to him of his business, of his enemies, of all that could irritate him, excite vexatious feelings, or weary his mind. At opportune moments suggest to him motives for resignation; for example, tell him that sickness is a natural effect of our condition here below; no one is exempt, neither rich nor poor; the saints themselves are subject to infirmities and sufferings, but they know how to sweeten the bitterness of them. God sends sickness in mercy; though painful to nature, it is a powerful means of salvation; it causes us to share a little in the holy Passion of the Saviour.

Know how to refute the objections of the sick. If it only affected me, they will say, I could easily be resigned; but my wife, my children—what is going to become of them?

That which troubles me most is that I cannot work nor pray. . . . Alas! I am still so young. . . . Listen quietly to all their regrets, and, while compassionating the trials of their sickness, meet their repinings with the principles of faith, such as that the will of God is to be preferred to all other blessings,—the paternal providence of God watches over the widow and orphan,—the Passion of Jesus Christ, etc.

The principal care of the sick-nurse should be to procure for his charge the happiness of receiving in time, and worthily, the sacraments of the Church. To this end let him pray God, consider all the circumstances, and study the patient himself to dispose him to worthily fulfil this great duty.

When he is satisfied that the disease is mortal, he would do very wrong to deceive his charge with false hopes of recovery. If he is not familiar with the thought of death, lead him gradually to suspect, to recognize the gravity of his state, and to comprehend what prudence requires of him.

Persuade him to place his confidence in God, who can, if He wills, restore him to perfect health. God gives us life; He is sufficiently powerful to preserve it to us, and to cure us of maladies which baffle human skill. He can even deliver us in a short time; but if it please

Him to prolong the trial nothing is better than to conform ourselves to the fatherly will which disposes all things for our good. Experience teaches us that in sickness there is much uncertainty and many surprises, and that the most skilful physicians are frequently mistaken. Prudence commands us to foresee all and to take precautions. Too much prudence can do no harm, while too much confidence may cause irreparable evils.

It is well usually not to propose confession abruptly. Speak first of the sick man's sufferings, of confidence in God, who can help him when human remedies fail. Then watch a favorable moment to ask your charge if a visit from a priest would be agreeable to him. Sometimes it would be well to suggest his joining in the novena which is made for his recovery; then it will be natural to speak to him of the sacraments as a most efficacious act of devotion. Other times you may attain your end by explaining to him the effect of the sacraments even on the body, particularly the corporal effect of Extreme Unction, which is called with reason the pharmacy of Almighty God.

If the sick man takes refuge in endless delays adroitly meet his pretexts and destroy the cause of his repugnance; it may be a false hope of recovery, fear of confession, the difficulties of which he exaggerates.

If he is obstinate in differing, do not force him; but pray him to determine a day and hour which will suit him. Meanwhile lead him to say some prayers, to perform some pious or charitable act.

If he openly refuses, if he answers by blasphemies, you must cease to urge him for the moment, and, without losing confidence, redouble your charity and attentions to him until a more favorable moment presents itself. In the meantime do not cease to pray and to have prayers said for him.

When the sick man has decided to receive the sacraments you may aid, or at least offer your concurrence, to dispose him to receive Holy Communion and to facilitate his thanksgiving.

After he has received the sacraments try to maintain him in Christian sentiments; see that he is not distracted by useless or dangerous visits.

See that he have an opportunity to gain some plenary indulgence, particularly that the indulgence granted by Benedict XIV. be applied to him.

Gently aid him to make acts of faith, of confidence, of love of God and his neighbor, of forgiveness of offences, of repentance, of abandonment to the will of God.

Give him holy water from time to time, or

offer him the crucifix to kiss, saying: *My Jesus, mercy!*

In his agony let the blessed candle be lighted. It is to be desired that a priest recite the prayers for the dying, but in his absence any other person may say them. Avoid sobbing, or any sound that could disturb the piety of the dying. Sprinkle him with holy water and put the crucifix to his lips, and softly suggest to him at intervals these short aspirations: *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Jesus, Mary, Joseph! Holy Virgin Mary, pray for me! Mary, mother of grace, mother of mercy, protect us from the enemy, receive us at the hour of our death!*

Avoid feeling the extremities too much to see if they are growing cold.

The signs of approaching death are a failing and intermittent pulse, difficulty in breathing, a sinking and fading of the eyes, a tremulous and mechanical movement of the hands, a cold sweat on the brow, and tears falling from the eyes.

Among the most certain signs of death are a coldness and stiffness of the whole body, a complete cessation of the pulse and respiration.

When the soul has left the body you should recommend it to God by reciting the customary prayers of the Church. As to the body, which has been the temple of the Holy Spirit, it should

be buried with decency and respect; for this reason it is well to confide this sacred duty to persons whose age and respect render them proper to fulfil it.

Behold the conduct of Christian charity towards the sick and dying. Happy those who fulfil this holy duty to others! They shall receive in reward the grace to die the death of the saints.

CHAPTER LXVI.

PARADISE.

Gaudete, et exultate, quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in cœlis (Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven). —MATT. v. 12.

IF the Christian has combats to sustain in this world, he also possesses a powerful source of courage in the thought of the reward which awaits him in the other. The Saviour Himself proposes heaven to us as a motive for courage and happiness. He wishes that in the midst of all trials the thought of our reward should not only sustain us but fill us with consolation and joy. *In that day*, our Saviour says—that is, in the day of your sufferings—*be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.* We should think, then, of heaven to encourage us in the practice of virtue in the service of the Master, who prepares for us this ineffable reward.

Now, what is heaven? and what is the happiness which the elect enjoy in heaven?

I. What is heaven?

Heaven, the abode of the blessed, is properly God's mansion, the place which He has created

for His royal abode, His own dwelling and that of His elect.

It is an immutable and eternal abode of happiness and glory, where this great Monarch of the universe dwells with His faithful creatures like a father with his children.

Faith clearly teaches us the existence of this abode, and we confess it when we say, *Our Father who art in heaven.* Scripture shows us also that heaven is a distinct place from the earth: *The heaven of heaven is the Lord's, but the earth He has given to the children of men* (Ps. cxiii. 16). *Heaven is the throne of God, the earth is His footstool* (Matt. v. 34, 35).

Scripture is less explicit as to the location of heaven; at the same time it constantly speaks of it as occupying the highest regions of celestial space. *It is a truth commonly received in the Church,* says Suarez, *and absolutely certain, that beyond the movable heavens there exists an immovable heaven* (a sphere), *more noble than all others, more luminous and more beautiful, the abode of the blessed. It is called the empyrean heaven* (the heaven of fire), *because, like fire, which is luminous in its nature, this corporal place is like the centre of light.* *

Heaven is God's throne and His most sublime temple, where He dwells by a special presence, and where He manifests His glory

* Suar., tom. ii. *De Op. Sex. Dier.*, i. i. c. 4, n. 2.

to the eyes of the elect. God is present everywhere, but He does not everywhere manifest His presence in the same way. He is present in all the universe, which for this reason is called the temple of nature. He is present in sacred edifices consecrated to His worship, which are called temples of prayer. He is present in the Catholic Church, which is also His temple—His living temple, the temple of His grace. But He is present in a wholly different manner in heaven, the temple of His glory. He there displays a glory of which all the splendor of the universe, all the beauty of the holy Catholic Church and the brilliancy of her august ceremonies, present but a feeble image.

Who shall tell the magnificence of heaven? *Only there our Lord is magnificent*, says the prophet (Isaias xxxiii. 21). The beauty and immensity of this palace are worthy of the Monarch who inhabits it; and we should say first that they are unspeakable. No; *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him* (1 Cor. ii. 9).

These words of the apostle show us that in this world we can have but a very imperfect knowledge of heaven; we see it only imperfectly, by the aid of faith, and veiled in figures —*Per speculum, in ænigmate*—but on leaving this

life we shall contemplate Him as He is, and *we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified* (1 Pet. i. 8).

In this mortal life we cannot know the beauty of heaven. A man born blind cannot comprehend the splendor of the sun nor the magnificence of nature, because he is deprived of light, —a necessary condition for seeing the material world. In like manner it is impossible for us to perceive the beauties of heaven while we are deprived of the light of glory.

We have, however, in this world a supernatural light, that of faith, which enables us to see, through images and figures, a shadow, a reflection, as it were, of the splendor of paradise. The transfiguration of the Saviour, His resurrection, His ascension, His apparition to St. Paul, to St. Teresa, and other saints, offer us rays, as it were, of the heavenly country, but very feeble rays, proportioned to the weakness of our mortal eyes.

Besides these faint shadows of heavenly glory we also have passages from Scripture which tell us of the heavenly Jerusalem. It was given the Apostle St. John to see it for a few moments in a prophetic vision, and he tells us marvellous things of it. The city itself, he says, was of pure gold, its walls of jasper stone, its foundations of topaz, emerald, sapphire, amethyst, and all manner of precious stones, its

gates of pearl. A sun, a thousand times more brilliant than our earthly planet, there makes eternal day; in the midst of the city is the tree of life, bearing perpetual fruit, and through it flow the river of peace and a thousand torrents of pure joys, where the elect are inebriated with long draughts of glory and happiness; in its centre is the throne of the living God, whence radiates a splendor which illumines all the city, and before which all the elect are buried in adoration, and about which range the angels with golden harps, the brilliant cherubim and the seraphim, with hearts burning with love. Such are the marvels which the Apostle St. John tells us of the city of God. But all that he has been able to tell us does not approach the reality; no human tongue could speak worthily of it, no intelligence comprehend it, until the day when it shall contemplate it unveiled.

On leaving this world we shall see with our eyes what we now believe without seeing. We shall see the splendors of the heavenly city, and we shall see its glorious inhabitants, the angels, and men admitted to the society of the angels. Yes, men are admitted there, but only, as St. John says, after having *washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14).

Now, we shall see all these saints and blessed

inhabitants of heaven; we shall see them brilliant as so many suns in the kingdom of their heavenly Father; we shall see the angels, who will greet us as brothers; the saints, who will embrace us with transport, recognizing us as brothers in arms, friends. We shall see the Blessed Virgin in her royal splendor; we shall see our immaculate, glorious Mother, who will receive us as beloved children. . . . We shall see Jesus Christ Himself in His glory. He will present us to His Father, who will cause us to hear these ineffable words: *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, because he is conformable to the image of my only Son. Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord!* What then shall our happiness be! We shall enter into the joy of our God as into an ocean of ineffable delight, where we shall abide for all eternity. This will be the beatitude of heaven.

II. Beatitude. The beatitude of heaven is ineffable; it is a supernatural and perfect beatitude.

1. The beatitude of heaven is ineffable. If no tongue can tell the beauty of heaven it is equally impossible to express the happiness which the elect enjoy in heaven. God rewards as God—that is, with infinite magnificence. For a glass of water He gives a kingdom, and the least of the blessed is richer than all the

monarchs of the earth. A day in the courts of the Lord is better than thousands of days in the joys of this world. Just as an hour in the torments of hell shall be more severe than a hundred years of penance on earth, so an hour in heaven is more precious than a hundred years of happiness in this life; and one day of this beatitude shall be a reward which a long life of penance and labor will not suffice to merit. *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18). *For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor. iv. 17).

What, then, is the happiness of the elect, and what may we know of it through the gifts of faith? The happiness of the elect, called *par excellence* beatitude, is a supernatural and perfect beatitude, which excludes all woes, which contains all blessings for soul and body, which shall be proportioned to the merit of each one.

2. It is a supernatural beatitude, superior to the order of nature; it is perfect, and much better than that of the just on earth; it excludes all woes, for the Holy Spirit tells us: *God shall wipe away all tears; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow* (Apoc. xxi. 4).

It contains all blessings which render the soul happy. The beatitude of the soul consists essentially in the possession of God through the beatific vision. This fruitive intuition of the divine essence, this view of God face to face, this contemplation of His beauties and His infinite charms, much clearer and more distinct than the view of corporal beauties, enraptures the soul with an ineffable love which inflames her with the sweetest fire, which unites her to God, which plunges her in God as into an ocean of love, where she is buried in the purest joys: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house* (Ps. xxxv. 9). Hence the transformation of the soul in glory: *We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is* (1 John iii. 2).

The human soul is raised to this sublime vision by means of a new light, which is called the *light of glory*. Inundated with this light, she beholds God through no veil, but as a child sees the face of its father; she sees the mystery of the Holy Trinity and all the perfections of the divine essence—its wisdom, its power, its infinite beauty; she sees with eternal gratitude God's ineffable mercy to her; she sees with incomparable joy her innumerable brethren, the blessed citizens of the holy city, all children of the same heavenly Father. Each of the elect sees that which particularly concerns and

which interests him on earth: pontiffs their church, kings their kingdom, parents their children; those who are venerated on the altar see also the homage, the prayers which are offered them by the living.

Besides the beatific vision, and the enrapturing society of the angels and saints, the blessed also enjoy the sweet certainty that their happiness can never end.

Heavenly happiness contains also all blessings for the body, all corporal perfections. The blessed shall receive them at their glorious resurrection, when our *Lord shall reform the body of their lowness by making it like to the body of His glory* (Phil. iii. 21).

The glory of the risen body is comprised in four new qualities which are communicated to it: transparency, subtility, agility, perfect impassibility.

We give the name *transparency* to the truly heavenly beauty of glorified bodies. They shall be luminous as stars, as suns, for our Saviour Himself tells us: *Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (Matt. xiii. 43), but with a light very superior to that of this world—a light which communicates to them incomparable grace and beauty. The divine Master showed us a reflection of it in His transfiguration. His face shone as the sun, the Gospel tells us; but its brightness was

far above that of our earthly planet, and transported the apostles so that they were beside themselves.

Subtility enables them to penetrate all bodies as easily as light penetrates crystal. *It is sown a natural body*, says the apostle, *it shall rise a spiritual body* (1 Cor. xv. 44)—that is, suitable to be the instrument of a glorified spirit, with no material matter to impede the movement and operations of this spirit.

Agility is the faculty of being able to transport one's self through the universe with incredible rapidity. *The body*, says St. Augustine, *will find itself, in the twinkling of an eye, wherever the spirit wills it* (St. Aug., *De Civit.*, i. 22, cap. ult.)

Impassibility shall render them not only invulnerable but inaccessible to all impressions of sorrow. St. Paul signalizes this quality, saying: *The body is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption* (1 Cor. xv. 42). By this expression must be understood perfect incorruption, more perfect than that of diamonds and of stars, and which will render glorified bodies invulnerable, unalterable, and immortal like spirits.

The principle of these glorious qualities of the body shall be the glory of the soul, which will communicate to its earthly substance its celestial beatitude: *The glory of the soul*, says

St. Thomas, *shall be reflected in the body* (*Cont. Gent.*, i. 4. c. 86).

The bodies of the blessed, being immortal and impassible, will have no more need of food, but they will taste all that is purest and holiest in the joys of sense. For if it is just that the reprobates are punished through their senses for having abused them, it is also just that the saints should be rewarded through their senses for having subjected them to the mortification of Jesus Christ. Therefore their ears will be charmed with the most harmonious sounds, their eyes ravished by ineffable beauty—the beauty of the Man God, of his holy Mother, of all the blessed; of the marvels of nature as well which they may contemplate throughout the whole extent of creation; finally, the ineffable delights with which the soul is inundated shall spread through all its corporal substance. *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God* (Ps. lxxxiii. 2).

The beatitude and glory shall be proportioned to each one's merit. All the elect shall see God, all shall possess God and enjoy all good in God, but not all in the same manner or degree. In the Church triumphant, as in the Church militant, there are hierarchical degrees. Hence these words of our Saviour: *In my Father's house there are many mansions* (John xiv.

2), and these of St. Paul: *One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead* (1 Cor. xv. 41, 42).

This inequality in the elect shall depend, not on the knowledge which they shall have possessed, nor the dignity nor the rank they shall have held, on earth, but on the merit of each one—his degree of sanctifying grace, the virtues he shall have practised, particularly his humility, his charity, his labors, and the part he shall have had in the cross of Jesus Christ. *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xviii. 4). Charity, says the apostle, is the first, the most excellent of all virtues, because it makes us love God with our whole heart, and thus merits for us the richest reward. Therefore the same apostle declares: *That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* (1 Cor. ii. 9). Each one, St. Paul also tells us, *shall receive his own reward according to his own labor* (1 Cor. iii. 8). If we suffer with Jesus Christ we shall be glorified with Him: *Yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him* (Rom. viii. 17). *As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation*

(2 Cor. i. 7). *When they shall revile you and persecute you, be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven* (Matt. v. 12).

Should we not rejoice at sight of the ineffable blessings which await us? Above all ought we not attach ourselves with inviolable fidelity to the service of the Lord, who promises such rewards? O Holy Virgin, our Mother and our Protectress! it is thou who shalt obtain for thy children that fidelity unto death; it is through thee, O Blessed Gate of heaven! that we shall enter this ineffable abode.

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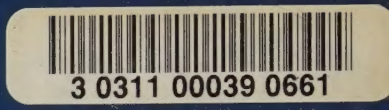
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